September, 1998

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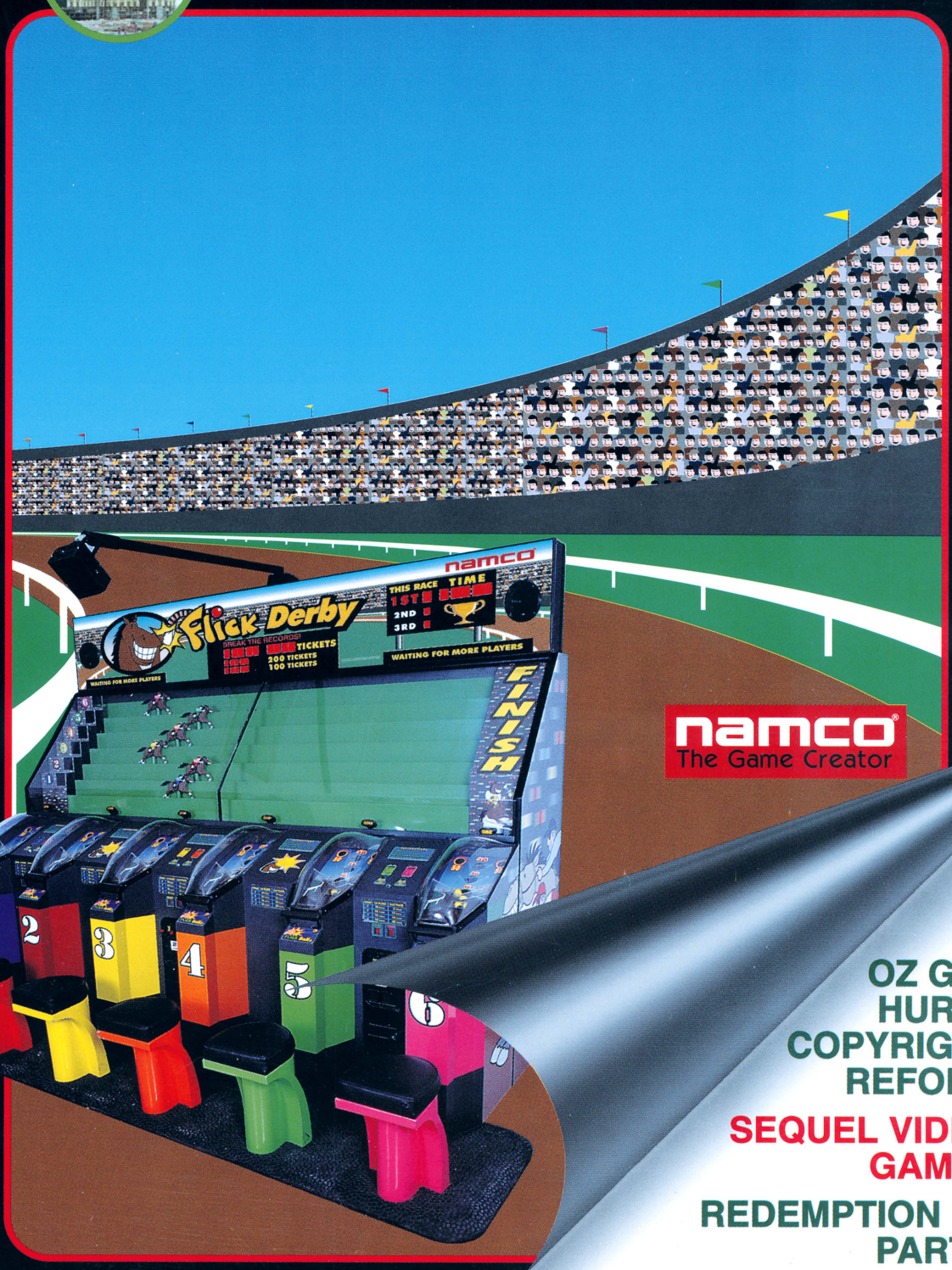

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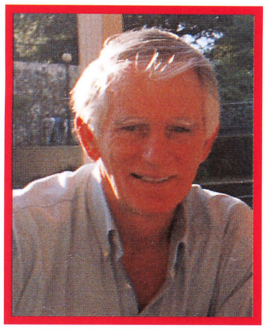


Tellin' It Like It Is

With Jack Rodios

CBI has made the point many times in the past that operators who refuse to use computers in their business, are basically not serious about wanting to make money, but anything said in days gone by along these lines, can be multiplied by a factor of at least twenty, as the Internet takes over the world of commerce, and we rocket towards the year 2000 at a rate of knots.

Whether we like it or not, the whole world runs on computers these days ..... and most of those computers are hooked into the Internet ..... e-mail is now the preferred method of communication (and by far the cheapest)..... already large sales of amusement equipment are being completed through Internet connections..... the wealth of information available on the 'Net is such, that if you have questions about anything at all, you can find the answers on a computer screen, courtesy of the internet.

And the Internet is basically a bonus, as a computer will first and foremost, enable you to operate your everyday business more efficiently and more profitably.

I never cease to be amazed at the excuses operators come up with to not computerise their business - "Hate the things" - "Too old to learn computers now" - "Too dumb..... - "I've only got a small operation" - and so on, but I really think the main reason is that many of these operators are intimidated by computers.

To hate them is no reason not to use them, I personally detest the bloody things..... but I love what they can do ..... and like many operators around the world who probably feel the same about them, I couldn't imagine business of any sort without one.

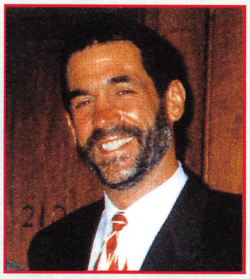
"Too old" is a total load of crap, you're never too old, and for the "Too dumb" brigade, believe me, I know some nice old dumbos, but don't know any who couldn't operate a computer. Today's computers are so easy to operate, you can get what you need out of them with a brain the size of a pea - as long as you approach them with an open mind.

If you don't get with it soon, you're going to be left further behind than Walla Walla, and though you may not have a clue who Walla Walla is, believe me, he was a long, long way behind.

Money Map

United Kingdom

Ballouz Put To Work



The effervescent Frank Ballouz has taken over from the retiring Shane Breaks as International Sales & Marketing Director of Namco Europe. Ballouz has over 20 years in the industry, having held senior management positions with Nintendo, Atari and Capcom, before his most recent position with the ill fated Playnet Technologies, but has retained his standing in the industry as a 'good bloke'.

The new job will mean relocation from San Francisco to London and while it's good to see the Ballouz put to work, we sense a bit of a culture shock coming on for the Londoners.

Austria

Video Games To Come Back

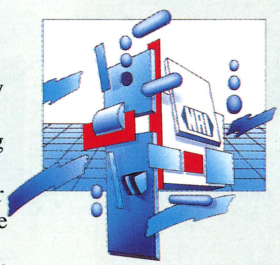
Owing to a six year old Law banning 'monitor based games', there has been no video games, or any monitor based game for that matter, in Upper Austria for the past 6 years, but that looks likely to soon change as the country's highest Court has found that the Law banning the games is unconstitutional.

While there is some chance that the Government of Upper Austria may try with new legislation to continue the ban, the general feeling is that the Government will accept the ruling and allow monitor based games to go into what is another potentially good market for multi game bar videos like the Concorde and the Megatouch.

Europe

'Euro' Poses Problems For Coin-op Industry

European manufacturers of electronic coin mechs are looking at a potential bonanza with the introduction of Europe's single currency, the 'Euro'. Apart from the very obvious similarity between old and new coins of vastly different value, which only well programmed electronic mechs will really be able to handle, the change over period is basically being left for each country to decide. Some countries are talking six months, some longer, some shorter and the only way we can see machines handling a couple of different sets of coins in each country is with an electronic mech.



Germany

Touch Screens Continue To Drive The Market

With well over 10,000 Concorde's, Megatouch's and others already operating in the German market, Touch Screen bar games continue to drive the coin-op market. While the market is still reasonably healthy compared to others, all sectors are down except for Touch Screen games - even the compact sports game sector which has been Germany's strongest performer for the last few years. Video games other than touch screen, are down 15%, though sales of the bigger dedicated games are up a few points.

Japan

Manufacturers Nibble at PC Platform

Taito, (along with Konami, mentioned elsewhere) have introduced a new system named G-Net, and we can only wonder what these companies have in mind, as while neither system, as we understand it, are genuine PC based systems, they nibble around the edges by using some PC technology, like 'flash memory' for example. And our old mates Sega have announced they will be releasing a similar 'system', shortly. One would think operators need three (and possibly more) new, non PC systems to muddy up the waters at this time, like they need a hole in the head, and between the PC brigade who are busily trying to confuse everyone with countless 'systems' that do the same thing - but don't - and the clowns from Konami, Taito and Sega, who are playing their totally predictable games - the industry is getting further away from a much needed, "universal platform" for video games than it has ever been.

United States

Lazer-Tron To Build Opus and LBE PC Arcade Games

Lazer-Tron, the redemption game manufacturers who have a PC system of their own that they use in Prize Zone and other Video Redemption System games, have entered an agreement with Opus Entertainment and LBE Systems to manufacture and distribute those company's Arcade PC games in the USA.

The company will start with Opus's popular Actua Soccer game (screen shot pictured), which is generating excellent revenue in Europe, and it will be followed by the highly anticipated Quake Arcade, a coin-op conversion of Quake, the immensely popular home PC game, which is apparently testing exceptionally well in US arcades.

Australia

DBR In Brasil

Queensland's DBR Leisure gave the Aussie flag a good wave in Brasil recently - albeit at great expense - when they were victims of the 'This is Brasil' syndrome that is the stock answer when things go amiss, and which has sent many a good man screaming to the rathouse. DBR never got to exhibit their products at SALEX '98 as intended, but Bert, pictured at left of pic with his Brasilian 'agents' won the locals over when he copped it on the chin, and made the best of what could have been total disaster, by selling a few of his great fibreglass Air Hockey tables off brochures.

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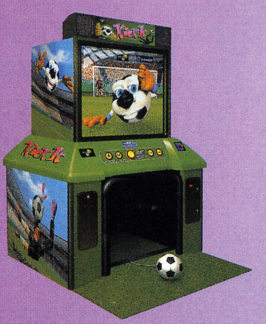

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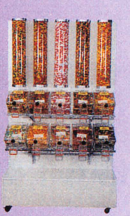

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AUSTRALIA - LATE NEWS

COPYRIGHT REFORM HITS HUGE BUMP WITH INTRODUCTION OF GST

Elsewhere in this issue is a quite positive article that tells of the Government moving toward Copyright reform that would open up the Australian amusement machine market to parallel imports - but that has all been thrown back into the melting pot with the GST.

In fact, if Australian voters react to Prime Minister John Howards Goods & Services Tax (GST) through the 'back pocket nerve', as they always have when in fear of a new Government proposal, the chances of continued Copyright reform, that would ultimately see the reintroduction of parallel imports in the amusement industry, will have dropped from a 98% 'almost certainty', to at best a 50% chance.

Had there been none of this GST crap to muddy the waters, the course was laid that would probably have seen the Copyright amendments legislated in the pre Christmas session. The Attorney General had laid out a schedule that saw submissions completed by the end of August, recommendations made and Legislation written by October, and depending on the amount of Government business, introduction to the Parliament, pre Christmas.

But Howard - that's "Honest John" Howard who said prior to the last election "Trust me, there will never ever be a GST" - released his rotten GST and a whole new scenario becomes not only possible, but in our view - highly probable.

Common sense dictates that the only possible way Howard can retain power is to go to an early election as the longer the GST is under scrutiny, the less chance he has. As we go to print, the GST debate remains in the supermarket with the 10% extra food will cost - or will not cost - according to who you listen to - but the real slug in the GST is the 'Services' side of it, and once the voters, the opposition, and the media, really start focusing on the cost of services, the lying Howard will look more and more like a Prime Minister that shot himself - not in the foot - but right between the eyes.

While the Liberals huge majority may see them clamber over the line in an election held before the end of October, anything later is almost certain to see them turfed out on their collective earholes - and then of course if they do scrape in, we'll have the GST (on playing amusement games) to contend with.

Chuck the clowns, we hear you say, but in reality, we don't want them chucked out - yet - after their Copyright reform is completed, chuck the lot of them, for sure - we hardly need a GST in this industry - but we do need that reform.

No matter how we at CBI look at it, only a March or April election can save the Copyright reform - If Howard wins an October election, the reform is certain to be put on the back burner as he'll have a hostile Senate, and it stands to reason that there will have plenty to do to try and get the GST through without worrying about Copyright reform - If the liberals lose an October election, the Copyright reform won't be completed, and we'll have a Labour Government - another bunch of clowns who opposed the recent Copyright reform on CD's - to contend with.

Nowhere near the pretty picture we were looking at just a few weeks ago, and we watch with interest to see if the Australian electorate are the huge bunch of raving idiots, the lying Howard thinks they are, or if they'll give him the flick.

"Trust me, there will never ever be a GST" said Prime Minister John Howard in his policy speech prior to the last election

In the USA, they're talking of sacking the President for telling a few fibs and letting his dick momentarily rule his head, what are Australians going to do with a Prime Minister who lies through his teeth, and gives every indication he should wear a condom for a hat?

AUSTRALIA

INTENCITY PARTNERS DROP LAZY $100 MILLION

The writing down of Westfield Corps $20 million investment in the Intencity chain of leisure centres to zero, is the penultimate step in the total demise of the concept.

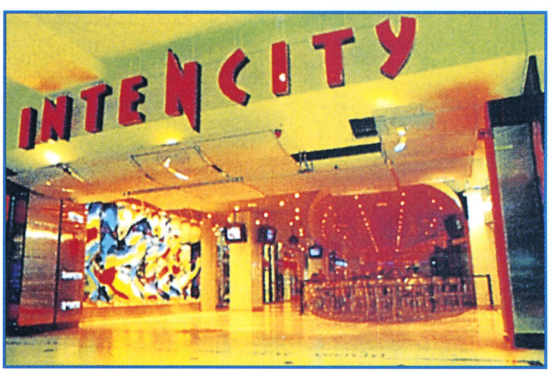
It only remains for the other two partners, Village Roadshow and Kerry Packer to similarly wipe Intencity off their books, and what seemed like a good idea at the time - will see the Village Nine Leisure consortium officially burn a lazy $100 million.

That is apparently happening now, and while writing the bickies off will tidy up the book work - in reality, Intencity - as it was born - has been dead for some time. Of the two 'flagship' centres in Sydney, Hurstville closed after 12 months operation, and Parramatta has been cut to about 20% of it's original size, while most other centres have also been closed or reduced dramatically in size.

Westfield give the reason for the failure as "Intencity's products being too expensive" and that is obviously one of the major reasons - building a business on a $4 per game of Daytona, price of play - was never going to work, but that was a management decision, and overall, management must cop the brunt of recriminations for Intencity's failure.

Poor selection of locations, (Hurstville for example) the way money was poured into setting the centres up, and the selection of incredibly high priced, but unproven attractions, basically ensured the venture would fail, and once the set-up figures were made known, everyone but management could see disaster coming.

Still, if you had to pick three companies who could burn $100 million without flinching, there's probably no three that could handle it as well as those who make up Village Nine Leisure - despite the big loss, all have continued earning excellent profits throughout the Intencity debacle. They're obviously not happy, but not badly hurt.



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Japan

Stock Market Honeymoon Over With Sega Enterprises

While many in the industry suck up to Sega for their own obvious reasons, and keep trying to tell us how great the company is, CBI's recent assessment of Sega's financial situation has been backed by none other than the worlds leading financial watchdog, Moody's Investors Service.

Citing intense competition from "financially stronger competitors", Sony and Nintendo, and weak consumer spending, Moody's Investors Service has downgraded its long-term debt rating of the Japanese home video game and arcade machine producer Sega Enterprises Ltd to junk bond status.

We assume that those who have had a go at CBI over our writings on Sega are aware of Moody's reputation in the financial market, and know just what the term, "junk bond status" implies.

The downgrade, from Baa2 status to Ba1 status, affects 120 billion yen ($857 million) of the company's outstanding bonds, and will also see Sega paying a considerably higher interest rate on any new borrowings needed to keep the company functioning.

Moody's said the agency was concerned that "Sega's earnings will continue to be pressured by intense competition from their financially stronger competitors, Sony and Nintendo, which have substantial market positions in the home video game business." Adding to this concern, Moody's said, is Japan's weak consumer spending, which will adversely affect Sega's arcade machine business and amusement facility operations.

The only bright light for Sega in the report was that despite the downgrade, Moody's said it expects Sega Enterprises to restore its market position with the new 128-bit home game hardware system (Dreamcast)..... but this was dampened somewhat when they would not comment on possible future ratings for the company, if the Dreamcast system failed to deliver.....

This strongly supports our belief that if Dreamcast fails, Sega are in big trouble, and would indicate that the new head honcho, Shoichiro Irimajiri (shown above at the launch of Dreamcast) better be sure he pushes the right buttons in the months ahead.

The most favourable assessments of Dreamcast's ability to take the home game market back from Sony and Nintendo, gives it a 50% chance, which sees Sega balancing on a knife edge..... but many other analysts don't believe the market is yet ready for a new system and give Sega 25% chance at best of upsetting the Sony and Nintendo juggernauts.

Coin-Op in Japan

Capcom Goes Into Attraction Mode

Japans Top Game for July

Capcom's 'Bio Hazard' home game for the PlayStation (called Resident Evil in some countries) has totted up such impressive sales (8 million odd) that the company are now developing a Park/FEC attraction around it.

To be named 'Bio Hazard Nightmare', the haunted house type attraction, which is being developed jointly with Toei, will be first installed at the Expoland amusement park in Osaka and if results are as expected, it will then be put into the market.

King of Fighters '97 Set New Record For SNK

SNK have shipped 150,000 pieces of the Neo Geo game, King of Fighters '97, according to their annual report which showed the company earned a nice profit for the year.

150,000 pieces of one game sold, (50,000 in Japan and 100,000 exported) is an all time record for the company, and a figure that would make other coin-op video game manufacturers drool..... but it also highlights the huge difference between coin-op and home games ..... when taken in context with the item above that tells of Capcom selling around 8 million pieces of their home game, Bio Hazard.

Konami Release New CD ROM System

Konami have released a new CD ROM system for coin-op games, titled 'System 573" that contains a 32 bit CPU and 16 megabytes of flash memory. The company have three games ready for the system, 'Bass Angler 2', 'Dark Horse Legend', and 'Powerful Pryakyu EX' that come on CD with security ROM cartridge.

As CBI understand it, the 'System 573' is not a full PC based system, as has been suggested

The Charts

All eyes were on Daytona 2's entry to the charts and there was some surprise when it came in at #3 with a lowly 7.3 rating and slipped to 6.6 after two weeks, over a point and a half behind Time Crisis 2 and Beatmania 2. Considering Tekken 3 at #5 in the conversion game chart is taking the same money per screen as Daytona 2, after more than a year in operation, there will be a lot of people hoping like hell that Daytona 2 doesn't mirror it's poor Japanese performance in other markets. Just a tick behind D2 in dedicated games, at #4 is Panic Park, then Sega Rally, Top Skater, Get Bass and HOD.

In conversion games, it's Virtua Striker V'98, Psychic Force 2012, Street Fighter EX2, a game called Dynamite Cop from Sega that we don't know much about, Tekken 3, Super World Stadium and Fighting Vipers 2. Pinballs are a no-no and Photo Sticker machines are holding pretty steady.

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Australia

Arcades on the Improve

There are continuing reports of arcades around the country definitely being on the up. Takings are apparently still nowhere near their top, but are considerably better than they have been, with noticeably better school holiday results than last year, and quite a few operators are now thinking a bit more positively about the industry, with games like and House of the Dead 2, known to be on the way.

While new games like Time Crisis 2 and Rally Champ 2 are given most of the credit, redemption games have also played a major part and though operators generally hate to give distributors any kudos..... for anything..... Village Entertainment's media campaign for Rally 2, should also get a lot of the credit, as our feedback implies the media blitz in conjunction with radio station, Triple M's 'Rock Patrol' of Village's Rally Waggons (pictured) which toured the suburbs and culminated in a TV Rally 2 play off between two celebrity drivers for a new Toyota rally car ..... brought quite a few players back into arcades..... players who have continued to drop coins into games well after the Rally 2 contest has concluded.

Site Contract Tested In Queensland

The "site contracts aren't worth the paper they're written on" brigade would no doubt be surprised to hear of a recent case in Queensland where a greedy site owner tried to chuck a contracted operator of Pool Tables & Jukebox, etc, for a greater share of the take.

The operator had a 5 year contract to supply games to the Leader Hotel Group on 50% commission, but was given the flick by the Runaway Bay Hotel when another operator urged in and offered them the same equipment and 70% of the take.

The original operator moved out, but didn't cop being chucked, lying down as the location was worth $1600 a week, and with the help of John Morrison as an expert witness, took the matter to Court, claiming damages against the Hotel of $280,000.

The matter was subsequently heard in Southport District Court and after Morrison finished with them (on the 4th day of sitting), the hotel group's lawyers accepted that the contract was valid, capitulated and sought a settlement which was duly made.

The terms and amount of the settlement are confidential to the Court, but so solid was the contract shown to be, and so comprehensive the defeat, estimates put the settlement figure at probably being somewhere around 75% of the $280,000 claimed.

A nice little earn for the operator, and the best sort of evidence that site contracts are worth considerably more than the paper they're written on.

OzClips

- Time Crisis 2 is still top game in Oz and looks pretty well settled there for a while.
- Daytona 2 has opened in Oz and as would be expected, the first few weeks have seen pretty good results, but we really think Sega stuffed up with this one which is more like Scud to play than Daytona, and we don't see it having anywhere near the impact of the first game.
- Must admit the colourful bunting that Village packaged with Daytona 2 looks great in the locations.
- Hankins and Galaxy hit back hard at the imported Pommie Police Commissioner over his dinosaur type remarks on 'pinball arcades', and we assume Village and LAI also gave him something.
- More Oz operators are enquiring about Redemption games than ever before, indicating that though it takes time, the light normally goes on once earnings are seen.
- Talking about lights going on, Dave C, an operator who's tried just about everything and is now into KR's, exclaimed recently "Why the Hell didn't someone tell me about these Kiddie Rides before?"
- Only a few here at this time, but top earning Oz redemption game from what we can gather is Benchmark's Claim Jumper which is reportedly pulling very big dollars.
- Cranes are yet another item that operators are having a second look at now that their eyes aren't completely fogged up by video games - and countertops could be next.

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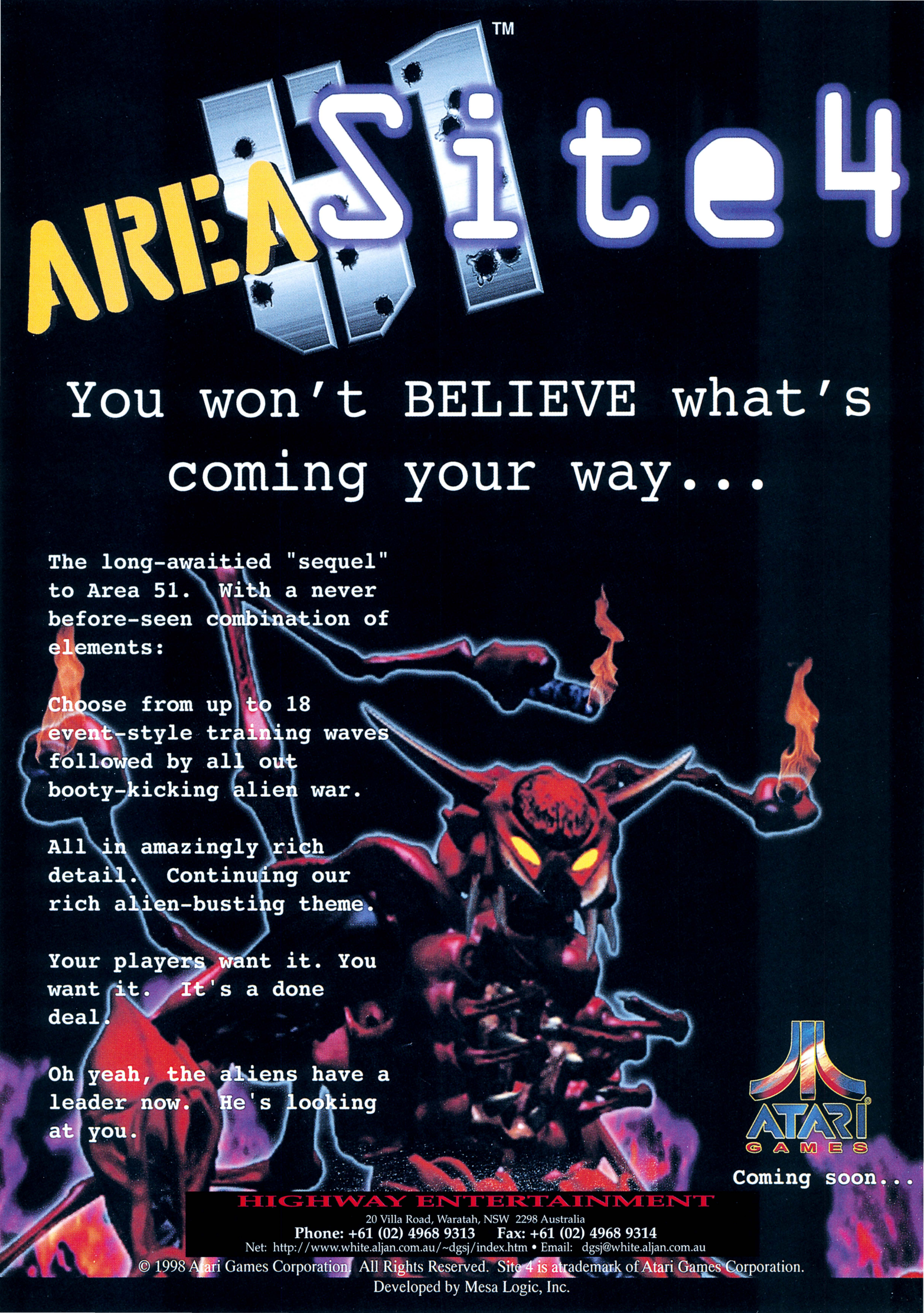

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AUSTRALIA

GOVERNMENT LOOKING SERIOUSLY AT PARALLEL IMPORTS

Though they have plenty of other problems on their plate, like trying to sell a GST, the One Nation party, an impending election and such, the Australian Government are still moving forward on their reform of the Copyright Act in relation to 'Exclusive Rights'.

With submissions having been called for from distributors on both sides of the argument, NAMOA and CBI, and in most cases received, by the Intellectual Property Dept of the Attorney Generals office, the matter now appears to be 'getting down to the wire' and a decision could be made in the very short term.

What that decision will be, is anyone's guess, but with what the Government is on record for saying in relation to how the Copyright Act has been abused by importers using the 'exclusive rights' protection, we feel safe in assuming that they will not look too kindly on the evidence of monopolistic trading and excessive prices that has been given to them in submissions from the industry.

In fact, on the evidence provided them, which covers the 'exclusive rights' prices of amusement machines back to 1985, and the contrasting period in the early 90's when parallel imported machines were legal - unless everything Government speakers have said on the subject is 100% BS - and that's always possible with Governments - they cannot do anything other, than open the market to parallel imports.

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Video GAMES

SNK's Hyper Neo 64 Fails To Excite

SNK, a company that earned the respect of the industry for providing operators with a constant stream of inexpensive games on the Neo Geo system, appear to have lost the plot with their new Neo Hyper 64 system, and are in danger of losing not only a lot of the goodwill built up over many years, but also a lot of revenue.

The high price of the New 64 system and games when bought in kit form, is enough in itself to get operators 'offside', but SNK's apparent determination to use the system to force their way into the dedicated game market is being seen as pure and simple greed.

Since launching the system, SNK have put five games into the market, two kit games in the poor performing Samurai Spirits and then just recently, Samurai Spirits 2, which doesn't look like being much better, and three dedicated games in Roads Edge, Xtreme Rally, which looks a bit like a sequel to Roads Edge, and a just released gun game, Beast Busters, which is also basically a sequel to the company's dedicated game made in the 80's - before they introduced Neo Geo.

But not only has the company's emphasis been on dedicated games, the price asked for the dedicated games, is far above what any of them are worth, sure they can be updated with a cartridge, but the game cartridges are also very pricey, and to date, none of them have raised a yelp insofar as earning goes.

All games so far produced on the Hyper Neo 64 have been 'limp fallers' and we would be very confident in predicting that not one of them will go close to matching the income of King of Fighters '98, which is standard Neo Geo, and a fraction of the price of the Neo 64's.

We heard SNK salespeople at SALEX, trying desperately to flog the Neo 64 games they had on show, Samurai Spirits 2, Xtreme Rally, and Beast Busters 2, but operators gave the impression, they wouldn't buy any of them at half the price - even on credit.

All operators wanted was King of Fighters '98, and this gave another view of how much SNK have lost the plot - because they then made operators buy a new Neo Geo motherboard with every KOF '98 game cartridge - operators who already had more Neo Geo motherboards than they knew what to do with in the depressed Brazilian market.

The halo appears to be slipping.

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Gremlin INTERACTIVE

OK Baby's Carousel a Winner

Just released from Wee Chin Enterprise Co is the 'OK Baby Megatouch Carousel' and though it's nothing startlingly new, or hi tech, it's definitely a winner. The full unit comprises of six stock OK baby cabinets with seats, the infills and also a big round 'Saucer' type gizmo over the top, which is not shown in the picture. The cabinets of course can take any games, but Wee Chin are right into the Megatouch and the carousels power to attract players, has seen it bump takings up over 30% per screen, over single machines in Taiwan, and similar in Europe.

Pinball

Viacom Take Big Chunk of Williams

If you follow the business papers at all, you'll know that Sumner Redstone, chairman of the huge entertainment conglomerate, Viacom is known as the "wise old owl"

So what's the wise old owl doing right now? He's buying shares of WMS Industries like it's going out of style.

Charles M LaLoggia, a highly respected newsletter author whose specialty is predicting takeovers, is a Redstone watcher. He notes that Redstone recently went back into the market and upped his stake in WMS to more than 25%.

"He bought 237,500 shares just last month and I figure you can never go wrong getting behind Redstone" LaLoggia explained. *"I don't know what he knows, but he must believe WMS Chairman Lou Nicastro has something up his sleeve"*

It is known that WMS (Gaming) which includes Pinball manufacturing, but not video games since Midway was floated off, is in profit ahead of expectations, despite the poor performance of the Pinball division.

And while the Nicastro's have shown they're pretty well committed to hanging in there with Pinball, a new owner like Viacom, may not be similarly committed - this in our view, must bring up the possibility of the Williams Pinball division going on the sale block, if Viacom move for, and are successful with a full acquisition.

And it would be interesting to see what price the premier Pinball manufacturer would bring if bids were called for.

Re-Visit

A51 Site 4 A Goer?

Word in that Atari's new gun game, "Area 51 Site 4" is clocking up some pretty mean figures in the US. The original Area 51 has proven itself over a long period as one of the best gun games made, and the word we have is that this one is different, but just as good.

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RePlay magazine

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PRIME CHOICE
From The June Issue of Replay Magazine:

Benchmark is #1 and #3 of the "Highest-rated games on this month's Player's Choice video, pinball and redemption charts".

CLAIM JUMPER

BIG HAUL

PRIME CHOICE

Highest-rated games on this month's *Players' Choice* video, pinball and redemption charts:

		RATING
1.	**Claim Jumper** (Benchmark token action game)	9.75
2.	**Cyclone** (ICE ticket redemption console)	9.68
3.	**Big Haul** (Benchmark token action game)	9.27
4.	**Jungle Jive** (Coastal pusher)	9.23
5.	**Harley-Davidson...** (Sega deluxe motorcycle simulator)	9.15
TIE 5.	**Surfin' Safari** (5 Star Redemption token action game)	9.15
6.	**Lost World: Jurassic Park** (Sega dlx. video game)	9.00
7.	**Solar Spin** (Lazer-Tron video redemption game)	8.97
8.	**Colorama** (Bromley novelty redemption game)	8.92
9.	**Treasure Falls** (Planet Earth novelty game)	8.71

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SNK Brazil

SNK Brasil, probably the most successful of any Japanese foreign subsidiary in the amusement industry, appear to have all their fingers hovering over the self destruct button, by directly competing against their distributors - the people responsible for the company's success - putting several out of business, and showing little concern for them. Brazilian head honcho Aoki, has been in the country over 20 years, and should know the people a lot better than what his recent actions suggest. We see this one as a short fused time bomb, unless Aoki wakes up to himself or Kawasaki san, the SNK Japan chief, pulls rank on him and puts the Brazilian company back on track.

New Bar Code ?

There's word that a large chunk of space in George St, Sydney has been leased by EDG for a new 'Bar Code' type facility. Will be interesting to see how they go for approval with a liquor license.

UK Too

While most of the attention on Sega centres on the dopey things they do in the US and Japan, they are doing just as bad in the UK where they've brought in what appears to be a Nakayama clone called Nakanishi (the 'Nak' is a dead set giveaway) to 'head up all the company's coin-op and gaming business'

The Nakanishi bloke will preside over the company's continued free fall from grace - over such real coin-op people as Bob Deith, and moral in the company is said to be at an all time low.

Atari

It's good to see that the Williams purchase of Atari has not cramped the innovative spirit of the company, who apart from Namco, are just about the only company with the cohonas to be innovative. Check out their new "Vapor TRX" it's got plenty of action, plenty of fun and it's definitely different

We Need 50% of the Market, But Don't Tell Them We Made The Thing.....

You could fill a book on Sega and not have to write a complimentary word about them as they stumble their way to self destruction - the latest word on the company is that they are seriously considering the deletion of any reference to Sega in the launch of the Dreamcast home system later this year - so great has the company been damaged by the Saturn fiasco in the home market - there's even talk that the thing won't have Sega branding.

And the Dreamcast, unless you aren't aware, is what the company have gambled everything on - they need 50% of the market or, it's sayonara Sega

Host Kicks Butt

Host Invaders, the PC gun game soon to be released by ICE Inc is apparently kicking butt in Australia, the USA and Europe where samples are currently under test. The game which will be sold as an inexpensive kit (about the price Police Trainer was sold at from what we can gather) is second only to Time Crisis 2 in gun games at most test locations and TC2 is very, very good.

Atari 2

Strong chance for release by Atari at the AMOA Expo this month is 'Gauntlet Legends', a remake of the fabulously successful Gauntlet, circa 1984, and another game called 'Site 4' which we think is a gun game, could also make it's debut.

Gauntlet, when you think of it, is very much the type of game played on PC's, and it could easily grab players again.

Mondial

Having sold a lot of their business with apparently more to come, distributor, Mondial Int'l this month cancelled what is apparently, the last of their advertising - Mondial Int'l have been in every issue of Cash Box since the magazine went international in 1994, they were valued clients and good people, we wish them the very best.

Business as Usual

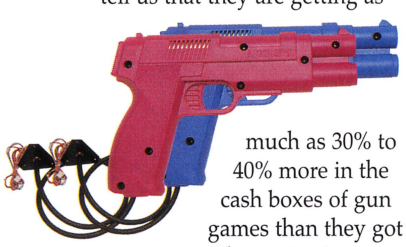
The default of the ParkLand group for quite a whack of money owed to US distributors and manufacturers, has left a dirty taste in the mouths of those affected, it's also putting a damper on the whole industry in Brazil, and wasn't helped much by the company having a huge stand at SALEX and carrying on as if nothing had ever happened.

Sega Again

Probably gets a bit boring, but this mob are really unbelievable. Their latest announcement tells us that they are not going to spend the reported $US100 million (they haven't got) on a huge media blitz to promote the release of the Dreamcast home system, they're going to spend $US500 million (they haven't got)

Great Guns

We hear the recently released Associated Leisure recoil guns (Recoil SF-X) are something special. Operators tell us that they are getting as much as 30% to 40% more in the cash boxes of gun games than they got with standard guns, and that the SF-X's are paying for themselves in a few weeks, even on old games.



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SEGA GAMEWORKS

THE SEGA BS GOES ON.....AND ON

Sega simply cannot help themselves, the Gameworks Press Release opposite is bad enough, and elsewhere in this issue we report on Moodys Investor Services downgrading of the Sega shares to junk bond status, but what about this one;

Even taking into account Sega's tendency to over hype everything they do, seldom has so much hype (read BS) surrounded the forming of Sega Gameworks in March 1996. All the Sega heads, lead by the Nakayama went into raptures about the joint venture with Steven Spielberg and Universal Studios which was set to "revolutionise sales of coin-op equipment" in the USA. The Nakayama spoke of his great vision for the future, and how Sega Gameworks was an integral part of that vision ..... how good the joint venture was for the industry, for Spielberg, etc, and of course for Sega, (which were getting their claws on a big lump of hard cash)

There was heaps more, but we're sure you remember it, so won't bore you with any more.....particularly as it appears there has now been a bit of a change in the thinking of the Nakayama..... a complete 360 degree turn in fact. Seems the Nakayama has forgotten his great vision since he got the flick from the presidents chair and has been bunkered down in the USA, 'cause Spielberg and Universal have just walked away from the coin-operated Game Sales Division, giving it back to Sega Enterprises USA for a minute fraction of what they paid for it. And the word we have is that they would be deliriously happy if they could walk away from the whole Gameworks thing and never hear the name mentioned again.

But what does the Nakayama clown say, straight face and all; We quote: *"This* (the walkout by Spielberg and Universal) *is a great business opportunity for both parties and we are extremely excited to grow our US distribution business. This transaction provides further reinforcement that our game creation efforts will result in products that meet and exceed consumer demand. We remain the largest shareholder in Sega GameWorks and the GameWorks entertainment venues will be an important customer for our products."*

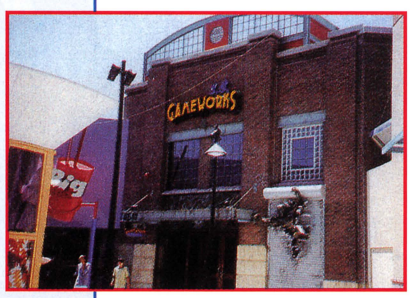
"The Game Sales Division is a successful business with more than 60 distributors and operators and annual North American revenues topping $80 million" he added.

So what the Nakayama bloke is telling us is that Spielberg and Universal, in the hole for at least $100 million on the whole Gameworks venture, are walking away from the *'successful business'* of selling machines at a huge loss, (as Daytona 2 which they could be expected to make a buck out of, comes on market) but hanging onto the failed Gameworks centres which we believe are losing money hand over fist - and it's *'a great business opportunity for both parties'* Give us a break Naka.

The facts are, as we understand them, Spielberg and Universal have been trying to get out of the Sega joint venture for ages, and are prepared to lose a big whack of money to do it, so unimpressed are they with Sega. Getting rid of the game sales is just a start and we can all be quite sure that in a relatively short time, we'll be reading about more *great business opportunities* from the Nakayama (if he's still there) when Spielberg and Co find a way to get right out of Gameworks without losing more than their $100 million. And the sad part about all this is that some industry publications, terrified of losing an ad, will print this fiasco as Nakayama tells it.

SEGA GAMEWORKS

.....AND ON



You really have to wonder about these blokes from Sega. It sometimes looks like a contest between Sega America and the parent company, to find who can look like the biggest goose. Here's a general Press Release we picked up on the wire.

> UNIVERSAL CITY, California, July 22 /PRNewswire/ -- Sega GameWorks, the company that has made interactive game play a fun and social experience with its successful GameWorks entertainment destinations, has named Bruce A Fabel senior vice president general manager, Operations in charge of all GameWorks venues and operations.
>
> In his new position, Fabel is responsible for overseeing venue operations in addition to disciplines that impact the guest experience including games and attractions, food and beverage, marketing, group sales, retail and creative services. Fabel also will be instrumental in managing the constant evolution of the GameWorks entertainment destinations.
>
> Under the direction of Steven Spielberg, GameWorks was created as the quintessential entertainment destination, delivering the best social experience around games. Adults and families can play and interact in dramatically themed neighbourhoods that offer a variety of high energy, visually stimulating and relaxing environments. Five multi-level GameWorks flagship entertainment destinations are successfully operating, with each offering a variety of games and full-service restaurants and bars, except in Seattle, where the GameWorks pub features fresh beer brewed on site, in addition to other beer and wine. Additional GameWorks sites will open later this year.

To come this "successful" crap when everyone and their dog knows the Gameworks joints are in danger of being listed a disaster area, when in fact, the Gameworks concept has been broken down to be little more than an arcade, and so on, is BS at it's best.

We can only wonder if Mr Fabel has any idea of what he's getting into.

SEGA VS 3DFX

It hardly balances all the flack, but one bit of good news for Sega comes in the announcement that an agreement has been reached to settle the potentially costly lawsuit that 3Dfx Interactive brought against Sega, NEC and VideoLogic over Sega's termination of a development contract with 3Dfx Interactive for Sega's game console, now named Dreamcast.

The terms of the settlement are confidential, but it's strongly rumoured that 3Dfx walked away with a big bundle of greenbacks.

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Brazil

Rowe AMi's New LaserStar

Rowe AMi chose Sao Paulo's SALEX Show to debut their new LaserStar and the Rowe stand, courtesy of a bunch of beautiful Brazilian young ladies was the busiest corner of the show.

And that's not putting the new LaserStar down, it's a great looking machine as can be seen in the picture where Joel Friedman stands guard over it, it has all the renowned Rowe features, and magnificent sound reproduction..... but it's still a machine, and had to run second to the Brazilian beauties, (three of about eight, shown below) who sang and danced on the Rowe stand for the three day duration of the Show, all with more moves than a bag full of wildcats.

Back to the LaserStar, music is one of the few sectors in the Brazilian market that is holding up, and where operators are actually buying, so we'd expect Rowe did quite well in Brazil with this new piece, which looks much better in reality than in the photo.

The flickering lights around the song selection panel has a much greater effect than can be shown in a photo and with the spiralling disc returned to the top section, this is a pretty cool looking LaserStar that is sure to find a lot of buyers.

Looks great, sounds great.....now if only someone would tell us how they make those Brazilian ladies.

Two More Models?

We hear Rowe AMi could release anther couple of new Jukebox models at the AMOA Expo in Nashville this month and an educated guess would have to put a new compact model at the top of the list. The big company, seemed to be marking time there for a while, possibly because of the constant talk of an impending sale, but it now looks much more businesslike and we get the feeling operators will be the ones to benefit.

Sound Clips

Harley Bonus

The standard Legend CD Jukebox from Rock-Ola is a great Jukebox no matter how you look at it, and the company's production lines have been churning them out in big numbers, but the added bonus of the Harley Davidson theming on the 'Harley Legend' has added another dimension to this popular machine, and on the sales we hear for this model, we'd be surprised if Rock-Ola don't follow the Jukebox theming a bit further down the line with some other big, legendary names, as they have been doing it for some time with their Antique Apparatus line of nostalgia machines with names like Coca Cola, and Chevrolet, etc.

Traditional vs Downloadable

The money being invested in new model Jukeboxes by the makers of traditional CD music machines, indicates the makers of downloadable machines still have a lot of work to do to convince operators that their way, is the way to go. Companies like Rock-Ola, Rowe, NSM and Wurlitzer, talk and listen to music operators, and they wouldn't be ignoring downloadable machines if operators indicated they wanted them.

Brazilian Box

Two Brazilian companies, working in a joint venture have produced a CD Jukebox primarily for the local and South American markets. The machine sounds considerably better than it looks, having good sound and volume, it's priced considerably lower than imported machines, and is reportedly quite reliable, but most operators at this stage are sticking with the well known brands.

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AUSTRALIA

TIME TO EXPORT NSW'S IMPORTED POLICE COMMISSIONER

It's just about time that someone parceled NSW Police Commissioner Peter Ryan up and packed him off home to the UK where he came from, if the best he can come up with as a solution for the rising crime rate in the state, is to close the "pinball arcades"

To even mention todays amusement arcades as being a problem, when under age drinking, drugs, drug related crime and violence, car theft, domestic violence, child abuse, prostitution, loan sharking, gambling related crime, robbery, murder, graft, corruption and just about every other form of crime is running at dangerously high levels, only indicates how inadequate this pompous poser is and how totally out of touch he is with the real world.....the world that he's supposed to police.

"Pinball arcades attract crime, they attract young kids, they attract those sort of people who prey on young kids, they attract prostitution - either by girls or boys - they attract drug dealers and they attract trouble on the pavements outside" said Ryan when put under pressure for his pathetic performance.

"I would like to see them very, very closely regulated and where offenses of that nature take place in those premises, more than just the current legislation dealing with it to be used against them - for example we could close them down" he added

Warming to the subject as he noticed the interest of the media who realised they hadn't done a 'pinball parlour' yodel for years, Ryan then went on to say that his experience as an officer in both England and in Australia, had showed 'pinball arcades' were criminal nurseries.

"Do we as a society say pinball arcades ought to be banned in the greater good, or do we say 'no, what's wrong with them, don't be a spoilsport, let's keep pinball arcades open' - but I know in my long experience that they attract all the things I mentioned" he cried.

What an ass - and what a chicken shit Police Commissioner - everyone on the planet knows that for every crappy crime born in an amusement arcade, there's at least 100 born in hotels and clubs, and for every drug deal done in an arcade, there's 100 done in schools, but there's no way this clown will start raving about the pubs, clubs or schools, because he knows the AHA, the Clubs Association and even the Teachers Federation, would tear strips off him, and expose him for the postulating poser that he is.

And what about the assholes from the media giving this clown front page headlines - 'Game Over' they cried as they were sucked right in by those magical words - pinball arcades - and gave Ryan exactly what he was after - a means to divert attention from his inept performance as Police Commissioner.

About the only credit we can give this clown is that he didn't show us that he was a real dinosaur by calling them "Pinball Parlours", though 'pinball arcade' is not that much better. Bundle him up, chuck him on a Jumbo, and get him outahere

UNITED KINGDOM

DAVE & BUSTERS A CLASS ACT

Dave (Corriveau) and Buster (Corley) co-founders of D&B's

While other concepts crumble one after the other, Dave & Buster's has shown that it's concept can cross oceans with the opening of the second international location in Bristol, England on July 30. The first D&B in the United Kingdom opened in May 1997 in Birmingham, under franchise by Bass Leisure as a test location, and it's continued success ensured the UK company would go ahead with their plans to open seven D&B locations around the UK. With Bristol now open, Bass will push ahead with new D&B's at London, Thurrock and Manchester.

``We have found that the Dave & Buster's concept of great food and great fun is completely transportable,'' said Buster Corley, co-founder and co-chief executive officer of Dave & Buster's. ``Our success in the United Kingdom attests to the fact that people all over the world love to eat, drink and play in a high quality and exciting environment.''

AUSTRALIA

RALLY 2 THEMED SITES PAY OFF TWO WAYS

The winners of the Village Entertainment "Best Rally 2 Site" that was open to all buyers of Rally 2, were the Fun'n'Games centre in Maroochydore, Queensland, and the Escape Hatch in Katoomba, NSW.

The two sites tied for the best themed site, and Village, who are the Australian distributors of the game, split the winners cheque of $1500 between them.

As can be seen, both sites put a bit of work into their theming, but it's proven to be well worth the effort for all concerned - not only the winners, but those who didn't win the comp also.

The two sites mentioned got a double barrelled pay-off, for as well as their cheques for $750 for the win, they reaped big benefits, and are still reaping them, in the cash box.

And from what we hear, those sites that put any effort at all into theming the game are generating considerably higher revenue per screen than comparable sites with no theming, so everyone's a winner.

Not a lot of money was spent by anyone - very little in fact - and it was clearly evident that the key to the theming caper is simply a wee bit of imagination.

Game Makers Outlook.....

"Stuff it, we'll make another sequel"

No matter how you look at the video game market these days - if you take out the Namco factor - there is a complete vacuum in imagination - all you will see are sequels, and the constant flood of 2's, 3's, 4's and so on, must have a hell of a lot to do with the poor returns the video game sector is generating.

Namco, even with their coming Tekken 4, are just about the only exception to the "stuff it, we'll make another sequel" school of video game developers that appear to rule the industry, some of their games like Prop Cycle and Final Furlong seemed a bit 'way out' at the time, but the company must be given top points for taking the gamble of being innovative - a gamble that the Sega's, Capcom's and SNK's, etc, obviously don't have the stomach for in this current climate.

How can we really blame players for deserting the video arcades for their home PC's or PlayStations when coin-op continues to dish up the same old stuff to them?

To be fair, there's sequels and there's sequels. Some have been very successful, that's for sure, but rarely those that just give players the same game with a change of scenery. Generally, the performance of this type of sequel goes downhill quite rapidly, after players try it on the back of a lot of hype, and then find the 'new' game is little different to the old game.

Game makers can occasionally pull the wool over operators eyes with a heap of hype, but they can't fool the players.

Of the huge number of sequels currently in the market, only Namco's Time Crisis 2 shows any imagination. Time Crisis 2 is a lot more than just prettier pictures, different scenery and a few new characters - with the second player brought into play, it's a completely different game to the original, and both Namco and operators all round the world are reaping the benefits.

On the other hand, Segas Rally Champ 2, for example, on a more powerful system with prettier pictures, is still basically the same game. It looks better, in fact it's magnificently presented, but beneath the gloss, it's the same game, and with only a few exceptions, players all round the world are tiring of it quite quickly.

On what we are seeing pour out of the factories, once again disregarding Namco products, there seems little chance of arcade video games ever reclaiming the exalted position they held in the amusement game industry - unless of course, the PC brigade can come up with some genuine innovation.

Sitting on a plane recently, in that pleasant land of no ringing phones, the old brain started wandering, and it conjured up pictures of Japans top video game development team sitting around a bottle of saki, pondering their next project.

"The boss wants a new game, so what will it be, fighting game, driver, gun game, soccer game or what ?" said the team leader, chucking down a big slug of saki.

"What about doing something completely different ?" said the apprentice

"A fighting game" came from the graphics man. *"Pass me that bottle"*

"What about doing something completely different ?" said the apprentice

"A new fighting game, your kidding, where would we start? said the leader

"OK, a driver" said the animation man between long gulps of happy juice.

"What about doing something completely different ?" said the apprentice

"A new driving game, your kidding, where would we start? said the leader.

"A gun game" said the sound man as he made a grab at the fast emptying bottle.

"What about doing something completely different ?" said the apprentice

"A new gun game, your kidding, where would we start? said the leader

What about doing something completely dif....?" started the apprentice, only to cop a goodly backhander from the team leader.

"Shuddup with that 'different' crap boy, this is serious business, make yourself useful and go and get another bottle of saki.... another couple of bottles" the leader added.

As the apprentice stumbled out, the team leader says *"Look, we can talk about this new game shit all day, and get nowhere. ..... stuff it, we'll make another sequel..... what the hell, we've been doing it for years and we've still got our jobs"*

Some of the Sequel Video Games in the Market From Major Manufacturers - Prior to JAMMA

Capcom

- Street Fighter 3 (28)
- Street Fighter EX 2 (29)
- Street Fighter Zero 3 (30)
- Star Gladiator 2
- Marvel vs Capcom (?)

Konami

- Racing Jam 2
- Bass Angler 2
- Beatmania 2

SNK

- Real Bout Fatal Fury 2 (6)
- Metal Slug 2
- King of Fighters '98 (4)
- Samurai Spirits 2 (5)
- Beast Busters 2
- Roads Edge 2 (Xtreme Rally)

Sega

- Virtua Striker 2, Version '98 (3)
- Virtua On 2
- Rally Champ 2
- Daytona USA 2
- Fighting Vipers 2

Taito

- Go By Train 2
- Psychic Force 2

(Numbers in brackets are those that probably should be on the games; eg, calling Real Bout Fatal Fury 2, a '2', completely disregards the 3 or 4 Fatal Fury's that were made - and Street Fighter 3.....ha)

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JAMMA '98 Tokyo, Japan
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September 23rd - 25th
Amusement Park China - Shanghai, China
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September 23rd - 25th
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October 15th - 17th
Fun Expo '98 - Orlando, Florida USA
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It's SHOW TIME

IAAPA • Those heading for IAAPA in November who haven't booked accommodation, should do so immediately, Dallas is a pretty big city, and has a lot of hotels, but we hear that accommodation for the IAAPA week is getting pretty thin already.

ATEI • On accommodation, the organisers of London's ATEI (January 26th - 28th) have added ten more hotels to their list of recommended central London establishments, increasing the number of hotel rooms in the ATEI Hotel scheme, from 7000 to 9000. ATEI has negotiated special room rates at the 27 Hotels, with some offering as much as 50% discount. Contact Samantha on +44 171 713 0302.

Fun Expo • Held in Orlando this year, Fun Expo is reportedly shaping up as the biggest ever with extremely heavy bookings for the excellent Seminar Programme being conducted.

JAMMA • The clash of dates between JAMMA and the AMOA Expo in Nashville will reduce the number of Americans at JAMMA, but we hear there will still be a pretty healthy US representation as expectations are high for some top of the line video games to be shown. While we also expect to see at least a couple of good games come out of JAMMA, we tend to think the big action will be at AMOA, courtesy of the PC brigade who have just about arrived at the point where they have to 'put up'.

AMOA Expo • With visitor numbers down alarmingly in Nashville following the closure of the Opryland Theme Park, visitors to AMOA Expo can expect to be well looked after in this always hospitable city, and despite early misgivings on the venue, exhibitors have rallied - are bringing a host of new products - and the central USA location looks like drawing one of the best attendances for some years. Look for some class items in Music, Bar games, Redemption, Kiddy Rides, and PC Games.

Asian Expo • Asian Expo is about to open as we go to print, and despite everyone concerned trying to appear confident, and there being a fair bit of optimism earlier, it looks certain that there will be a considerable drop on numbers from last year, (which wasn't that hot) with the financial problems in South East Asia, really starting to bite.

AMOA Expo • We're not sure that it will be ready for AMOA, but we hear of a 'ripper' redemption game coming from Buffalo that is themed on a blockbuster movie under license. A big machine that's certainly no *toy*, this one apparently has quite a *story* to tell, and if it doesn't make AMOA, look for it at IAAPA. ICE will definitely show the production model of Host Invaders at AMOA and it looks top value.

Australasia's Amusement Expo • Caught with dates that clash with the Melbourne Cup - for those who don't know, the Australian horse race that stops the nation every year on the first Tuesday in November - the organisers of the AAE in Surfers Paradise have added a 'Melbourne Cup Extravaganza' to the programme, they have also cut the registration fee to $20. Exhibitor bookings are looking good and all efforts are being made to have all the new equipment from JAMMA and AMOA Expo on display.

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namco - The Game Creator

Regular readers will know that CBI has given Namco a few whacks in it's time, regardless of our respect for the Nakamura gent, who founded the company, still heads it, and still retains his sense of humour.

We have been quite critical of games like Prop Cycle, Final Furlong, Rapid River, etc, and for things like their refusal to do a linked, Dirt Dash, but while that criticism has often been shown to be valid, we have on other occasions had to eat our words. But the point of this article is that regardless of whether Namco's games have been good, bad or indifferent, they are innovative, and that,s something that cannot be said about most, if not all, of the other Japanese video game makers.

Namco have used the byline "The Game Creator" for many years, and have been responsible for many 'firsts' in video games, but they've never stood out from the crowd as much as they do today, with their lone range of original games, amid a sea of sequels from the other manufacturers.

There's no '2' or '3' tacked onto games like Final Furlong, Downhill Bikers, Panic Park, Rapid River, or Family Bowl, they're totally original, and while Time Crisis 2 does have a 2 after it's name, it's a vastly different game to the first Time Crisis, being innovative in itself. When Tekken 4 comes out, probably by the end of the year, there may be a few sniggers on these remarks, but with the strong performance of all the Tekken games to date, we don't think operators will label Namco as just another sequel maker.

And on top of that, operators would have no problem with the other Japanese video game companies for making so many sequels, if they produced the number of original games that Namco produce.

This isn't likely to happen though as they don't appear to have the creative minds needed, and the cost of Namco following the course they do would probably be more than the others are willing to spend.

Developing, say a Ridge Racer 3 for example, would have to be a lot cheaper with them having more than half the work already done, than it would be for Rapid River..... and with Rapid River going down the same gurgler that most water games in this industry go down, they surely would have sold a hell of a lot more Ridge Racer 3's than they did, Rapid Rivers.

Fortunately for all of us, they don't seem to let that worry them, and it was good to see the company have success with other innovative games like Final Furlong and Downhill Bikers, even though we nearly had to eat a Final Furlong when it earned well in countries other than Japan, where it's still round the top of the charts.

Namco's latest game, Panic Park, is again different, and while at first glance it may seem a bit weird, if you watch players playing it, you'll see people having a heap of fun and totally engrossed in the game, when you play it yourself, and get into it, you'll find just how much fun it is to play, and also that there's a hell of a lot of depth in it, so we wouldn't be one little bit surprised if Panic Park is another unusual Namco game that thumbs it's nose at the critics, and turns out to be a pretty good earning proposition for operators. The new video redemption game, Family Bowl is also expected to do well, particularly in FEC's.

Namco have also recently released a new fighting game titled Soul Calibur, (which could be related to Soul Edge) and this one uses the excellent 'Time Release' of characters, weapons and even new stages to great advantage, giving rise to pretty high expectations for it to have a long and productive life.

And there's still JAMMA to come, the show that all Japanese manufacturers save their best for, and where Namco are certain to trot out more new products..... *who knows, maybe even "the big one" that the industry is desperately waiting for.*

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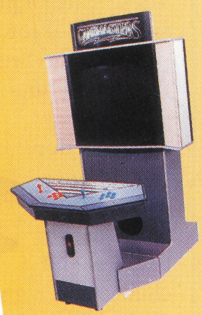

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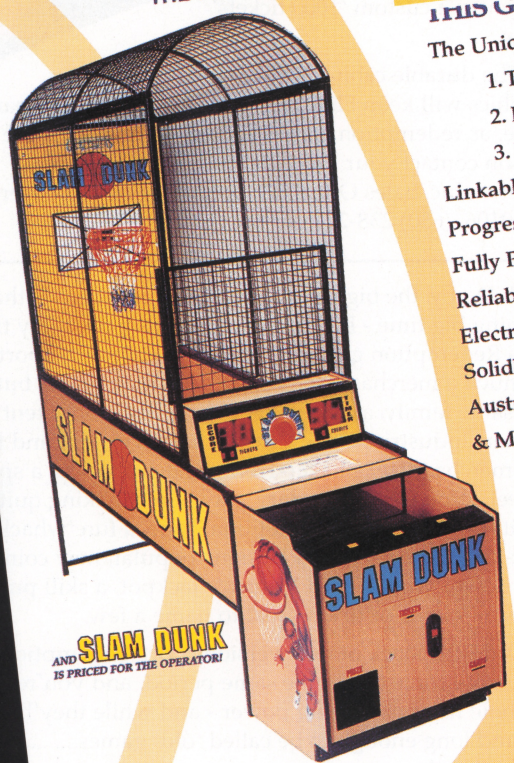

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REDEMPTION ZONE

Part 2

New Games..... "Old" Games

Quite a lot of operators, who've concentrated on video games and are not familiar with Redemption, often make comment about the lack of new games, and have even taken us to task for writing about 'old' games like Cyclone, for example.

Needless to say they have a bit to learn, as the longevity of good games is Redemptions strongest asset. Cyclone, released somewhere around late 1994, is still vying for the top position in the USA, still earning top money, and still being manufactured by ICE Inc today, some four years later.

Imagine how much those initial machines, which sold from memory, for around $3500 to $4000 have earned their operators. An average of a measly $100 a week would total $20,000 and we know US operators that are still averaging round the $400 to $500 mark, after much higher takings in the early years -an average of $500 over four years would show a gross of more than $100,000 for a spend of $4000.

Obviously, no one in their right mind would throw a game like Cyclone out, just because it was 'old', and most operators have a stack of similarly consistent earning redemption games, some 'older' even than Cyclone, that they have no intention of getting rid of either - which means their ability to keep buying new redemption games is limited by the space they have for them.

And if operator buying is limited, the flow of new games must also be limited.

There are also, unlike video games, a lot of new Redemption games that don't get to market, the list of prototype redemption games that have been built, tested, found wanting, and never put into production would be quite big, and is greatly beneficial to operators in that when a company puts a new game out, they can be pretty sure that it has at least tested good. And every year, there is a sprinkling of good new Redemption games made, look at those made in the last year or so, like Benchmarks Claim Jumper, the four player coin or token roll down, which looks like it will be the game to finally knock Cyclone off it's pedestal - Namco's Flick Derby, the big six player horse racing game that is earning big time - ICE Inc's Frantic Fred, probably the best kids Redemption game ever made - Sammy's Sports Arena, as much a merchandiser as a Redemption game, but from the same family, and capable of high and consistent earnings - Smart Industries Prize Circus, the clever skill and fun playing merchandiser - Lazer-Tron's Match-Em-Up, a spinning wheel game with secondary play that's making quite a name for itself - Skee-Balls Demolition Zone, a fun 'whacker' game that kids are into, Island Designs popular, new coin or token roll down, Vortex - and Namco's Jackpot, a skill pusher that pays in tokens or tickets, just to name a few.

Add the stack of new version sports redemption games that have come out in the same period, and you're looking at a whole heap of earning power - and while they'll all be around long enough to be called 'old' games..... who cares when they keep earning.

Flick Derby

Quietly released late last year Namco's Flick Derby has steadily moved into the market and is making quite a name for itself with an excellent earning ratio to it's price.

It's a similar type game to the very successful Elton Derby games, seen in bigger FEC's and Parks, etc, only in this one, players flick a ping pong ball into relevant holes rather than roll a solid ball down the table to get the horses moving down the raceway.

Players take a seat at one of six positions. The pre-recorded audio announces, 'and theyíre off!', then players 'flick' their way to the finish line. In front of each seat is a playfield with four holes, each hole has a point value of 10 - 50. The mechanical horse images on the track above, move according to the number of points the player gets. The object of the games is to score as many points possible as fast as you can to win the race. Tickets are awarded to first and second place winners!

Flick Derby is fully automatic, there is no need for an operator to 'call' each race and reset the game, but a microphone is available for those locations that choose to call their own races and beat up a bit more excitement. Another big factor it has going for it is that it only takes the space of 2 or 3 upright video games, so can be operated virtually anywhere. There's also a progressive jackpot for the players who break the record time set, a multi-coin function that allows players to increase their payout chance and a great 'Ticker Saver System' that dispenses a custom '1000 tickets' token.

The durable cabinet structure and appealing graphics will keep Flick Derby looking good for years to come, as redemption games should do and for more information contact your local distributor or the Namco America Inc. Sales Office 877 Supreme Drive, Bensenville, IL 60106 (630) 238-2248 or fax to (630) 238-9333.

Rumours are strong that the company will release their much awaited new driving game at this months JAMMA, though our people tell us that ATEI is more likely.

Whenever a new driving game does come from Namco, it will be very interesting to see if the company's game developers can be different and innovative, or choose to be different and innovative, with something as important to the company as a driver. Since the days of the classic Pole Position, Namco have rarely taken the easy road with their driving games - they've done a few sequels here and there, but rarely go past '2' with a game unless they really have something to add to the theme, so there are a lot of operators around the world eagerly awaiting the next Namco driving game (one '2', we're sure many operators would welcome would be a linked Dirt Dash)

And it will be equally as interesting to see what Namco can do with Tekken 4, should it surface in the next couple of months as the 'grapevine' suggests it will. The Tekken series has been something pretty special, with each Tekken game to date performing better in the cash box than the previous version, but you have to wonder if even Namco are capable of doing it again with a fourth version.

But the good part about speculating on future Namco games is that you can be pretty sure, no matter what the game may be, the company will have made a real effort to produce something different to what their competitors are churning out, and that will always be a plus for operators.

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REDEMPTION

Part 2

The good Redemption games all have a few things in common; they were not made for brain surgeons - are quick - have a definite skill factor - but not too much to scare anyone away - give the perception of value, to both skilled and unskilled players - and allow all players to believe they have a chance of winning.

We mention Benchmark's Claim Jumper elsewhere as the game most likely to oust Cyclone from it's long held #1 position, and it has all those factors - watch one in action on low coin or token value, and you will be amazed at how many coins players will pour into it, always confident that they can land a good payout, but rarely succeeding.

Claim Jumper is a four player coin or token roll down where the object is to roll the coin into a slot on top of a 'rail, dump truck' of which a dozen or so circle the playfield. It looks easy enough - just a matter of getting the timing right - and when successful, the train stops, backs up to the dumping bay and dumps whats in the truck, and the player wins a big bunch of tickets, trouble is of course, it's not that easy, and if set-up right, the game will pay only the percentage the operator is working it to.

Yet when players exhaust their supply of coins or tokens - even sometimes in double quick time - they walk away happy - still confident that they can beat the machine next time, and comfortable in the knowledge that they haven't lost all anyway, 'cause they have a wad of tickets to show for their efforts. Little wonder it's a top earning game.

Benchmark are 'on a roll' actually, as they also have another coin roll down that's right up there with the best of them in Big Haul, which has been in the market well over a year now and doesn't look like weakening, and their 'spinning wheel' games Slam Bingo and Inline, are no slouches either.

The well known ICE Inc are the biggest manufacturer of redemption games in the world and they have an enviable reputation for producing quality games. The magical Cyclone holds pride of place in the ICE range, which is logical, but the company have a stack of top games in the market, some that they have been building for much longer than Cyclone. For example, ICE started in the business about 16 or 17 years ago with Super Chexx, the domed Ice Hockey game that most would be familiar with, and they are still making the game and selling it today.

As well as the top earning all round game in Cyclone, ICE Inc have products in most categories and their games are generally in the top 2 or 3 if not on top. Their Mouse Attack for example is clear leader in Video Redemption Novelty games, their ICE Ball, a frontrunner in alley bowling, and so on. The latest game from this company is Frantic Fred, a fun video redemption game, designed by the designer of Mouse Attack, specially for kids.

This one's a beauty, 'Fred' is a cartoon like bear that kid players control with a steering wheel with the aim of guiding Fred to catch the apples falling off a tree, in his mouth. You see little kids with this one and you know you're looking at a winner if you have a location with a fair smattering of families and particularly, little kids coming in.

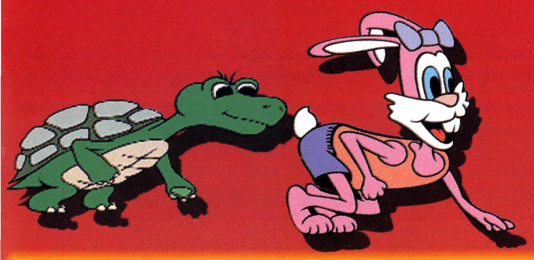
Sports Arena

This latest creation from Sammy USA is a sneaky little beast that could slip by operators not paying full attention, and those who have suitable sites and let it slip by, will surely miss out on an opportunity to earn.

Basically a merchandiser it may be, but this machine has shown since it came out some months ago, that it can earn top dollar in any company 'cause it follows unbeatable coin-op principles - it's simple, it gives players what they want in a game that they can win at, and gives them the opportunity to win things of perceived value.

With the quite incredible increase in sports marketing over recent years, which is highly unlikely to do anything but increase further, Sammy's Sports Arena, which uses small, sports themed prizes, is a product that will always have new and fresh stock available for operators to freshen it up with, and there's no real reason why it won't continue earning for many years.

Attractive and quite reasonably priced, the Sports Arena is equally at home in arcades, FEC's, malls, parks, or just about anywhere there's people with a few coins in their pockets to spend.



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REDEMPTION

Part 2

ICE Inc, Benchmark, Skee-Ball Inc, Smart Industries, Harry Levy of the UK, Coastal, Lazer-Tron, Island Designs, Seidel, etc are names that you see many times in this magazine and in any writings on redemption, they are the redemption craftsmen of the industry and one of the best groups of coin-op manufacturers that you could wish to deal with.

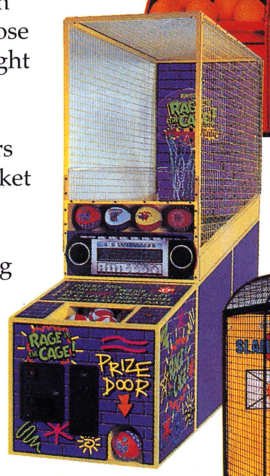
But Namco is probably a better known name than most of them even, simply because of it's premier position in big name video games, and while this company has dabbled in redemption regularly, they appear to be devoting more of their resources to ticket games now than in the past. The result of this increased activity can be seen in the recent games, Flick Derby, Jackpot, Family Bowl and others, all high quality products that are innovative, but have the basic simplicity needed for success in the redemption field.

Jackpot is a one player pusher that is quite different from most for a start with it's seven coin slots for loading, and three ticket dispensers (remember Jackpot is a single player game)

It uses the 7 coin slots along a horizontal axis where others generally use an aiming mechanism or swinging shute.

When coins (from 1 to 49) are inserted into any of the slots, they stack edge to edge (flat-wise) and are completely visible to the player, who can then release them onto the moving tray by either pulling a release lever and guiding the coins one by one, or by pushing a button which drops all the coins in the coin slots onto the playfield at one time.

When the player is successful in tipping coins off the moving tray, the win is converted to tickets, making the game suitable for operation in all but those with very tight regulation. And where most pushers have one ticket dispenser, Jackpot has three, adding a big whack of excitement during a payout sequence. Another good aspect of Jackpot is that it has a definite skill factor and with this, plus a ticket pay-out, it should please most regulators who frown on straight pushers.



The cabinet features neon lights from the Las Vegas strip, and other decorative features include a rotating beacon light on top of the game, flashing rope lights in the front and polished steel and mirrors for a bright energetic appearance.

The two biggest makers of pusher games, Harry Levy and Cromptons, both from the UK, also have some excellent games that have the desired skill level and pay out in tickets. These two companies both have excellent reputations and large ranges of pushers from single player up to around six player stations, so there's plenty of variety in this field. While there are regions that won't allow pushers of any type, the machines, if they can be operated, are very popular and generally very high earners.

Sports redemption games are another consistent earning sector - generally they don't hit the levels of the really hot redemption games, but their consistency over many years of operation, make them an excellent investment. The two items that redemption centres virtually have to have are Basketball games and Alley Rollers and the companies to look for here are the American companies, ICE Inc and Skee-Ball Inc who have both Basketball and Alley Rollers, Coastal Amusements (Basketball), Lazer-Tron Inc (Alley Rollers), Bay-Tek (Novelty Alley Rollers) Design Plus Industries (Alley Bowler) and the Australian company Gamemasters (Basketball and Alley Rollers) .

ICE and Skee-Ball have huge ranges of this type of game and generally swap #1 and #2 spots on most charts of top earning sports games. Skee-Ball has the top of the line Super Shot Basketball, well known all over the world, and recently took over the manufacture of Rage in the Cage.

After basically rebuilding the game from the bottom up, Rage in the Cage is now one of the best sellers in the market and has shown that with it's miniature Basketball prizes that are paid to winners directly, it's not constrained to just locations with ticket facilities, and can be operated anywhere.

Gamemasters' Slam Dunk is another good Basketball game that dispenses mini Basketballs and this is probably the easiest type of redemption game to operate of all. The Slam Dunk has a ticket option (as we're pretty sure Rage in the Cage does) so operators get the best of both worlds with these popular games.

Top of ICE Inc's Basketball is the Full Court Fever game, but ICE's relatively new Hoop Fever has had a big impact on the market since it came out. Hoop Fever takes coin-op Basketball right back to basics, no moving hoops or backboards, no gimmicks, and the attractive unit, done in the colours of Michael Jordans Chicago Bulls, is recording excellent earnings..... and a very quick pay-back as because of it's basic simplicity, ICE have been able to keep the price down to a very realistic figure.

Hoop Fever can be linked and also has a backlit bonus marquee that features a free game or free prize option that enables the game to be utilised in non-redemption arcades or on street locations

The #1 Basketball game from Coastal Amusements is Double Jam..... or it was when we started to write this, but it may have been taken over by now, by the recently released Triple Jam which looks very much like it will wrest the Coastal 'Flagship' role from Double Jam. Triple Jam gives the players three hoops to hit and the concept not only provides variety to a location, but can actually draw players.

Alley rollers like Skee Ball Lightning and Ice Ball are staples, they just keep earning, but so to do the novelty type alley rollers and these fun pieces that come in full size and in several smaller models, also have a bit more appeal to families.

The two companies most into this type of game are Bay-Tek and Skee-Ball. The popular 'Scat Cats' from Skee-Ball, is a full blown alley roller with the player bowling to knock over the cats, while Bay-Tek's ' Jump Shot' is a sit down, small ball, game that turns alley bowling into Basketball and it too is very popular. There's lots more in this line, but we'll have to pick up on it another time.

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SALEX '98

No World Cup, Coin-op In The Doldrums, But Brasil's Operators Hang In

While the SALEX '98 Show was a bit disappointing on previous years as far as exhibits go, the attendance didn't seem too bad considering the state of the local industry.

The Brasilian coin-op game market is pretty sick, you don't have to be an Einstein to see that, the country's economy is being propped up by high interest rates of 2% a month and higher, there's virtually no credit available to operators after defaults by Park Land and others, and the few new games coming into the market, aren't overly impressing the players.

But the biggest hurdle the coin-op industry faces in our view is the Governments handling of slot machines. They seem incapable of stopping the huge proliferation of slot machines on the street - either that, or they don't want to. Everywhere you look in Sao Paulo, there's slot machines of all types, and our understanding of the situation is that all except electronic Bingo machines in licensed Bingo halls are technically illegal to operate.

We're told that sitting on the wharves of Sao Paulo are another 32 large containers full of slot machines, Spanish and Australian made, basically waiting for the owners to agree on the amount to be paid, and on who the money will be paid to, before they are put out onto the street.

Many amusement game operators, after finding they simply cannot compete with the slots, are trying to get a bit of the slot action, and while some are succeeding, the foreign manufacturing companies seem to have it pretty well sewn up.

Coin-op's only real chance of getting back into shape in the short term would seem to rely on the slots being banned, and that may happen after the election in October as many think that pressure from church groups and other bodies will force any newly elected Government to act decisively. There's even some talk of a trade-off that would see the church drop it's opposition to licensed casinos if the Government clears the streets.

Anyway, in an environment like this, where operators are basically 'hanging in there', it's hardly remarkable SALEX '98 didn't see a huge amount of business done. There were a few select items that attracted buyers, but most coin-op and park exhibitors would have been at least a bit disappointed with obvious shortage of spending money.

Most of the Jukebox manufacturers should have been quite happy with the show as coin-op music is holding up pretty well, we know Rowe AMi did some good business with their new LaserStar, and NSM were also quite chirpy about the response they got to the Sapphire.

Added attractions made the Rowe stand the most popular place at the show - The local distributor stocked the stand with a bunch of gorgeous, black clad Brasilian ladies, and those who got tired of watching them dance - weren't into lovely ladies - or were some other sort of weirdo - could go round the side and watch Joel Friedman crooning to the Karaoki.

SNK appear to have their finger poised over the self destruct button, they should have done good business with King of Fighters '98, but they got greedy and made operators buy a new Neo Geo motherboard with each KOF cartridge. This bumped the already high cost of this Neo Geo game up to $US1200 odd and was a bit sick for our money.

Over recent years, SNK have made a lot of money in Brasil and with the way the industry is right now, squeezing an extra couple of hundred bucks per game out of KOF '98, with motherboards that nobody wants is pretty low. SNK have taken enough out of Brasil, to put a bit back in when the industry is down, and for them to try and bleed operators more, shows them up to be just another greedy Japanese company that couldn't give a stuff for operators.

They've built up a very solid base in Brasil, but will need to rethink a few of their moves or it will all come tumbling down once operators have an alternative source of cheap games from the PC brigade. Even more than most people, Brasilians don't take one little bit kindly to being crapped on.

CBI has been a strong supporter of SNK since they brought in the Neo Geo, but they've lost us the way they've constantly jacked the prices of game cartridges up over the last couple of years to the $US 900 odd (distributors price, we believe) they're asking for King of Fighters '98. The game, looks pretty good, but it's not worth that sort of money, particularly so soon after King of Fighters '97.

SNK also showed the new Hyper Neo 64 games, Samurai Spirits 2 and Beast Busters 2, but they were pretty mediocre and the price they're asking for Neo 64 motherboards, and Neo 64 games, will ensure they don't sell too many in Brasil, or anywhere else.

Capcoms Street Fighter 3 got a pretty good workout at SALEX, but the video games that attracted most attention were Daytona 2, and the two diversely different PC Soccer games, Actua Soccer and Kick-It Junior.

Daytona 2 got a lot of attention for basically all the wrong reasons - for two days, a pair of Daytona 2 twins stood at each end of the Park Land stand, without a picture or even a light to be seen in them. On the third day, Park Land must have got a board out of hock, as they finally got the attract mode up, but no one could play the game as the technicians couldn't get games up on it - leaving operators completely in the dark on the game other than what they could see in the attract mode.

On the other hand, Opus Entertainment's PC game, Actua Soccer got the locals interest, even though they had just been whupped in a World Cup Final that they expected to win easily. Opus's Leon Deith was a forlorn sight for best part of the first day - a victim of Brasils carefree attitude, Leon waited all day for the locals to find him the cabinet with high resolution monitor that they had promised him, and which never eventuated.

But it was vastly different on the second day when he got the game up on a borrowed monitor and the locals were able to see it. Operators were taken in with the brilliant graphics that even show players footsteps in the ice covered field of a Winter scene, and even though they couldn't play it, they were quite confident it would earn, and several good sales were made, making Leon the happy gent you see in the picture above.

Kentucky Derby Games by Elton Amusements

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SALEX '98

The dedicated PC video game, Kick-It Junior from Interactive Light was extremely popular. This one's a smaller and less expensive version of Kick-It, and we think SALEX was it's first showing. The game itself is the same and anyone watching the activity around it at the show, would be amazed if Kick-It's not a hit in Brasil and right through South America - they loved it, and boy, can't some of those guys kick a Soccer Ball.

Electronic Darts appear to be making a bit of a move in South America through good promotion by Recreativos Presas and Arachnid. Both company's stands were constantly crowded and we know of a couple of very good sales that were made.

Redemption games are also becoming popular in the Family Centres of South America and while not a lot of business was done in this area, it wasn't because operators didn't want to - they simply didn't have the money to invest - operators we spoke to told us that they wanted desperately to get into redemption, but at this time they could only afford to buy a few video games that give a pretty quick return - but from this, we'd have to think redemption will end up doing pretty well down there when things pick up.

We believe some sales of redemption games were made, but only to the larger operators with established family type centres.

Another victim of Brasil who we really felt for was the Australian company DBR Leisure. After spending a nice old whack for space to exhibit their fibreglass Air Hockey table in an enclosed Black Light stand, shipping products and bodies half way across the world, and all the other things that cost when trying to enter foreign markets, DBR never got to show their products which sat on Sao Paulo's wharves for the duration of the show.

For two days, Bert kept his spirits up in the hope that the table would arrive at his stand, but it was not to be, and on the third day he knew he wasn't going to get it. We haven't spoke to Bert since returning, but would bet a million, the table was cleared the day after the show closed.

That sales were still made off brochures, indicates DBR were on a real winner, had they got the table there and operators were able to see it under the black light, but at least the few sales they made prevented the project from being a total disaster and they get top points for trying - this sort of endeavour takes cohonas.

The Parks section of SALEX, as expected, was also pretty quiet, a number of the big park ride manufacturing companies apparently reduced their exposure when several new park projects in Brasil were either put off or substantially scaled down till the economy and the price of borrowed money gets a bit more favourable, but there were still quite a few represented with well known companies like Zamperla, Doron, Intamin, etc taking space for pictorial displays, and having staff on hand to rustle up a bit of business.

Argentina's American Engineering, one of the few company's to bring a production model ride to Sao Paulo, were kept busy with their 20 seat, Pampa 2000 simulator though, and we heard that they landed a few orders. After a couple of years battling for recognition, this company have really got it together with the Pampa, which gives a top ride, is pretty reasonably priced, and looks to have a bright future providing they can keep the films up to it.

There was also a good collection of Bumper Cars and unusual, but elaborate park style Kiddie Rides from Euro Games. The big rides like the Pony Waggon pictured are well made and really look good.

Over all, it has to be said that SALEX took a step back this year, but all things considered, the organisers done well in getting the number of exhibitors and operators that they did. Brasil is pretty sick, but it will bounce back as nothing could keep the Brasilians down for too long, and we'd expect SALEX to bounce with it. As the first SALEX since the tragic death of Steve Whatmore, who founded the show with Roberto Selles, and who was a tremendously popular figure in Brasil, there was an underlying touch of sadness in Sao Paulo this year for a lot of us, but we at CBI once again thank John Mohamed, his beautiful family, Roberto, and our many friends there, for their wonderful hospitality and continued support in what are difficult times.

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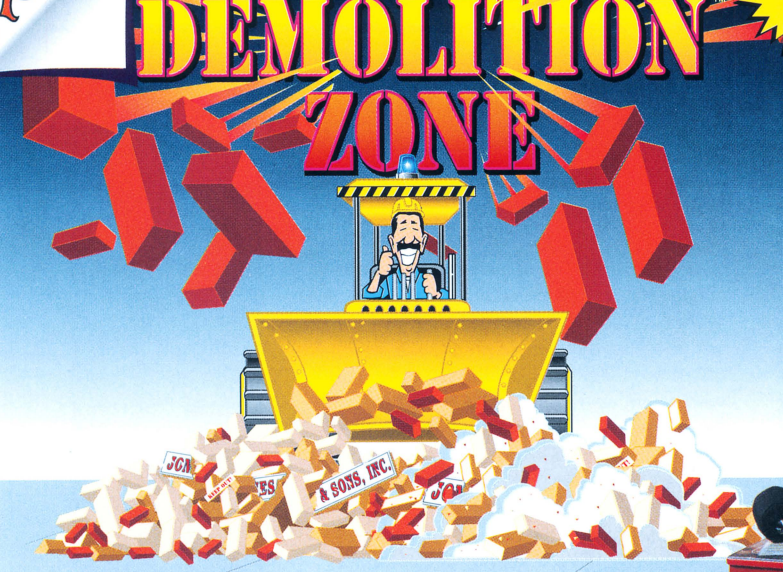

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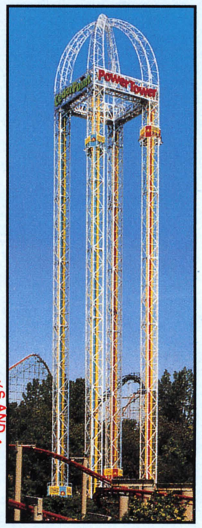
New S&S Rides Coming



The 'word' is that a major new ride announcement will be coming from S&S at this years IAAPA (Dallas November 18th - 23rd) as they debut the Double Shot tower which offers two blasts on a smaller tower for parks with height restrictions. The second new ride the company will be announcing is marked 'Top Secret", but it's known that everyone in the company are extremely confident they have another top seller and we hear the ride does something very, very quick..... quicker even, than if it was using LIMs, which it's apparently not.

EUROPE:

Universal Active

As reported earlier, Universal Studios has purchased a controlling interest in Spains Port Aventura park which will now have Universal's logo on the name as they take over operations and building of future attractions. The company has now committed to building 3 hotels adjacent to the park over the next three years and there's a strong story going around that they are considering building "Universal Studios Europe" next door also.

It also seems likely that Universal will buy the UK's Rank Corp's 50% of the Universal Studios Escape resort as it's known Rank are under pressure from investors to make faster and higher returns and they've intimated that they will to sell their interest in the resort while it's still profitable.

NETHERLANDS:

Super High Python

Reports say the aging Vekoma Python coaster at Efteling Park will be removed in about two years to be replaced with Super Python, which could be one of the world's tallest coasters ever built.

UNITED KINGDOM

London Parks Show

The move by ATEI's London Parks & Attractions Show, into Earls Court 2 exhibition centre, appears to be paying immediate dividends with excellent bookings from park ride manufacturers for the 1999 event in January. Aided by a strong economy, and a lot of activity in UK (and Western Europe) parks, the UK and European market is looking very attractive to manufacturers and they see the LP&A Show as an ideal showcase for their products, which will in turn provide an even more beneficial Show for visitors

Japan

More Jackson Theme Parks Announced

The weird one is at it again. The gloved pop star, Michael Jackson announced last month that it plans to build two more theme parks in Japan, another park in Asia and a global toy store chain.

The Jackson said it will start a company for the ventures called Michael Jackson Japan Co, which will have initial capital of 500 million yen ($3.57 million) No questions were allowed at the press conference called for the announcement and no information on a start date for the parks, possible locations, attractions that the parks would offer, or who the Jackson has lined up to partner it in Japans costly real estate market where $3.57 million might just buy space for a toilet.

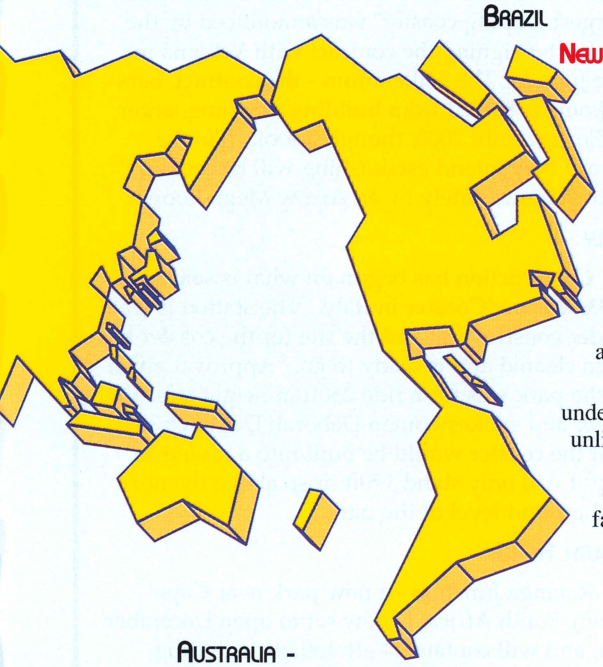
The Jackson is apparently 'chuffed' that it's not being taken seriously, but how could anyone possibly do that - last year it announced plans to build a $500 million theme park in Poland, that would be finished mid 1999. In the last few months, it's announced plans to build parks in South Korea, South Africa, China, Brazil and Las Vegas, as well as 3 or 4 casinos, but nary a brick has been laid nor a plot of land nominated, in Poland, or anywhere else, and the clown does not answer questions.

Canada

Movement in Vancouver

The on-again-off-again Landmark park in Vancouver, Canada is apparently still in the works with an announcement expected as we go to print. Another Theme Park is also a strong possibility in this area, it will be built by "SeaParks" in conjunction with a proposed riverboat casino if the casino gets the approval it's expecting. The $200 million park would be themed to the early Gold Rush.

Brazil



New Parks Slow

New Park developments in Brazil are feeling the pinch of extremely high interest rates on borrowings and a very poor economy. The general bank rate of interest in Brazil at present is around 2% per month.

Several projects now under construction appear unlikely to meet opening schedules, or at best, open with incomplete facilities and less rides and attractions than intended

Australia -

Fox Studios Move Ahead With Sydney Theme Park

While Fox Studios are doing very nicely in the film business, they're a long way behind the other big name film studios as far as theme parks go, but they will soon be operating in Sydney Having obtained a magnificent site in the old Sydney Showgrounds, Fox already have a working film studio up and running, and the rest of what they call "the adventure" will open late next year. Patrons will enter a walking Backlot Tour which will end with props from Titanic including the boarding of a lifeboat to escape the sinking ship, and then move into a large entertainment zone which will have many and varied attractions, 14 cinemas, restaurants, and music venues similar to Pleasure Island at DisneyWorld

NewsClips

Scream A Little Quieter At Knotts

The new Supreme Scream ride at Knotts Berry Farm is a noisy neighbour, say residents of an adjoining Buena Park neighbourhood. Sound diffusers have had to be added in order to muffle the ride's mechanical noises.

Dingoes For Dreamworld

Australia's Dreamworld Theme Park, home of a magnificent Bengal Tiger community, has achieved Queensland's first sanctioned breeding of purebred dingoes. The animals will be kept in a secure facility and used for educational presentations.

Grenade Attack at Cambodian Park

A grenade, apparently thrown from a passing motorbike, killed one person and injured at least six others at a Cambodian children's amusement park last month.

Dreamworld Promoters Charged

Harold J. Lee and Alfred J. Almeder, the two men who have been promoting a proposed Dreamworld theme park for a spot along the Cape Cod Canal, have been charged with conspiracy and mail fraud. According to the indictment the two misrepresented the company's financing, land ownership, and sponsorships to potential investors defrauding them out of over $200,000.

Dracula Seeks New Blood

Romanian tourism authorities are seeking foreign investors to help build a theme park based on the Dracula character, in hopes of spurring development in the region.

SLC Shutdown

Ride manufacturer Vekoma International has ordered a shut down of all of their popular Suspended Looping Coasters in order to check for a "design variance" after a problem turned up during an inspection of one of their rides.

Rodriguez Tops 1,000 Hours On Coaster

Richard Rodriguez, who had been riding Blackpool's Big Dipper (UK) 22 hours per day since July 18th, has reached his goal of riding more than 1,000 hours on a roller coaster, by riding for 1,013 hours and retaining the world record. The record he had previously set was 549 hours.

Boy Dies After Fall From Flume

A 12-year-old boy who became frightened at the top of Knott's Camp Snoopy's Log Chute ride, climbed out and fell more than 30 feet, has died from his injuries.

Teen Dies On Closed Park Slide

A 19 year old Dover Township man bled to death early Saturday morning after lacerating himself on a giant slide in a closed amusement park on the Jersey Shore. He and three friends had broken into the park for some free rides, but failed to notice the heavy chain across the slide.

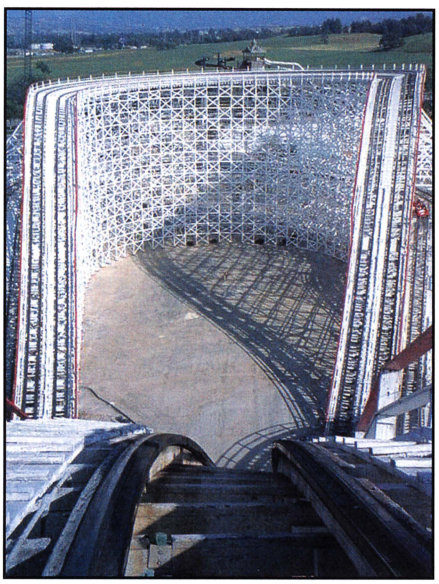
Worker Injured In Coaster Accident

Alex Mingo, a 33 year old workman who was building a climbing wall attraction beside the Wildcat roller coaster on Atlantic City, New Jersey's Steel Pier, decided to take a rest -- by leaning back against the Wildcat's rails. One of the ride's cars struck Mingo, knocking him unconscious and putting him in hospital where he's now enjoying a good rest - albeit with a bit of pain.

United States

Big Dueling Woodie For Busch

A pair of dueling GCI Wood Coasters, bigger than the Colossus pictured, and each different, will be built at Busch Gardens Tampa for the 1999 season. Named Gwanzi after a fable of a Lion with a Tiger's head. There will be two tracks, both will be 90 feet tall with separate lift hills, and race over 7000 feet of track, passing each other 6 times at 50mph. The trains on Gwanzi will be heavily themed to look like the Tiger & Lion, and apparently dive at each other at a 45° angle before swinging into the dueling part of the ride which has a lot of tight turns and drops. The three minute coaster ride will have 24 passenger trains that will depart at the same time to provide the dueling action. Separately themed, the Gwanzi Lion which is "powerful with superior strength" will be themed with lava rocks in an African desert atmosphere while the Gwanzi Tiger (cunning with unmatched speed) will feature a lush and cool Asian style landscape. Busch describe the fable - and the ride, thus - *"Both (the Lion and the Tiger) are locked together in an intense battle over a territory neither one can ever share...and neither one can ever leave."*



Costing around $10 million the Gwanzi coasters will be the largest in the South-East of the USA.

Brazil

Insano - Tallest Waterslide in the World, and Well Named

As far as park rides go, world records are mostly spoken about in relation to roller coasters, but here's a world record water slide.

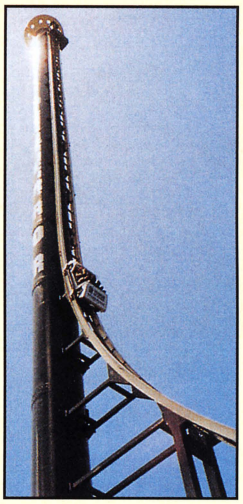
Named the Insano (which translates to 'Insane' in Portuguese and fits the ride perfectly) this huge ride is at the picturesque, Aqua Park in northern Brazil, situated beachside just outside Fortaleza, and at 41 metres high is clearly the tallest waterslide in the world.

The Insano, or part of the Insano, was originally installed at a Wet'n Wild park in Texas, but rebuilt at Aqua Park by local tradesmen to it's expanded height of 41 metres. The locals also added additional smaller slide towers that service two enclosed speed slides, three open inner tube slides and an enclosed black body flume, then topped the whole thing off with a German built mechanised sailor, dressed in old 1800 odd clothes that perpetually tries to climb a rope at the side of the tower, without ever succeeding in reaching the top.

Aqua Park has six themed areas and Insano sits smack in the middle of the biggest section, Atlantida (Atlantis - The Lost Continent) making a great feature attraction.

World

Japan



Korakuen Park outside Tokyo are are installing a new Intamin LIM Inverted coaster on top of a large rooftop. Using 2-across cars, the ride will fire the train at about 50mph down the track and up a vertical 164ft tower, where it will fall backwards, through the station, and up a second 164ft vertical tower, before returning to the station - giving Japanese the sort of ride that Australians (Tower of Terror) and Americans (Superman) have been enjoying.

Germany

Volkswagen, the car maker has announced a new "Theme Park" style attraction in Wolfsburg, Germany to be called "Autostadt 2000". The $400 million 60 acre complex will feature a luxury Ritz-Carlton hotel and large glass building that look like an engine block, where VW will display all of their products as well as a few simulator style rides. It's slated to open in May 2000.

United Kingdom

Fantasy Island, the future home of Europe's "largest looping coaster" was announced by the park after signing the contract with Vekoma in late June for The Millennium - the contract, bars Vekoma is barred from building anything larger in Europe until 2000, though it looks like the record they intend establishing will be broken almost immediately by an Arrow Mega-Looper.

Italy

Construction has begun on what is said to be a B&M SpeedCoaster in Italy. The station is well under construction and the site for the coaster has been cleared and is ready to go. Approval given to the park was for a ride 250ft in height over the River and spokeswoman Deborah DeMarco said that the coaster would be built into a ravine so that it will only stand 170ft or so above the normal ground level of the park.

South Africa

Ratanga Junction - a new park near Cape Town, South Africa, is now set to open December 4th, and will contain 24 attractions including Cobra, a yellow & blue inverted coaster that's said to be a Vekoma SLC. Two smaller coasters will open as well as Black Fever, a water ride. The 62 acre park will cost around $100 million.

Spain

Construction has begun on Terra Mitica, a new park near Bennidorm, in Spain that is scheduled to open in the Spring of 2000. The only attraction confirmed so far is a new wood coaster designed by Intamin & Roller Coaster Corp of America that is based on Six Flags, "The Rattler".

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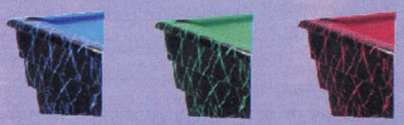

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BAHAMAS:

DISNEY TAKE TO THE SEA

Walt Disney Co took to the sea last month, launching an Art Deco-styled cruise ship that will sail to the Bahamas in a bid to spice up the company's profitable Florida theme park vacations, which could be facing choppy waters. The Disney Magic, an 83,000-ton ship that can carry 2,400 passengers and a crew of 915, was christened at Port Canaveral on the Atlantic amid fireworks, kite stunts, sky-writing propeller planes and sweltering Florida heat by Patty Disney, wife of the company founder's nephew, Roy Disney.

Dancers bounced giant beach balls into an audience of several thousand, and dozens of caged birds were freed as the new ship, 11 stories high and painted black and white with a Mickey Mouse logo on twin red smoke stacks, pulled into Disney's whimsical terminal.

The Disney Magic is the first of two ships ordered by Disney and styled along the lines of early 20th-century cruise vessels such as the Normandie. In conjunction with park visits, both ships will offer three- and four-day trips to Nassau, Bahamas, and to a private, renovated and renamed island formerly called Gorda Cay and infamous as a hiding spot for drug smugglers.

RODS GO DOWN

Disneyland's new Rocket Rods ride, part of the heavily hyped New Tomorrowland, will be shut down for three to five weeks. The ride has been plagued by breakdowns since opening.

NEW HYPERCOASTER

STEEL EEL SET FOR SEAWORLD

The Great White Shark coaster which opened at SeaWorld San Antonio last year has been such a raging success that Busch Entertainment are adding another for the 1999 season.

While the Shark is an inverted coaster, the new ride, designed by Morgan Manufacturing, and named the "Steel Eel", will be the first 'Hypercoaster' in the Southwest USA.

The Steel Eel ride begins with a high speed drop of 150 feet, goes into a dogleg curve and then screams over the first hump of a full camelback hill before diving another 65 feet and going into the second camel hump. Another 113 foot drop followed by a steep 44 degree curve, sets the train on the run home which features four undulating eel like bumps (which gave the beast it's name)

The camelbacks and humps create maximum "air time" and the fiends who designed the ride estimate that riders will leave their tummy's behind them approximately 8 to 10 times during the ride.

United States

START ON JAZZLAND

Ogden Corp has commenced construction and secured financing on Jazzland, a 140-acre theme park located in New Orleans. Public-private financing for the $80 million project includes the largest government-sponsored loan to date. Jazzland will be owned and operated by Ogden and is scheduled to open in the year 2000.

Jazzland is projected to attract 1.6 million visitors annually and will be the only major theme park in a three-state region including Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas, with the nearest major theme park 350 miles away in Houston, Texas. Showcasing the unique culture of New Orleans and Louisiana, Jazzland will include distinct themed areas including Jazz Plaza, Cajun Country, Pontchartrain Beach, Mardi Gras, and Gospel Gardens, all offering a variety of thrill rides, games, live entertainment, and music.

DISNEY PARKS UP

The Walt Disney Co earned $415 million in its third quarter, down 2% from the same period in 1997, but the loss didn't come from the theme parks.

Disney's theme parks and resorts posted record operating results with quarterly revenues jumping 10% to $1.5 billion compared to the 1997 quarter. The nine-month figure of $4 billion was up 8% over last year.

NO OPRYLAND HURTS NASHVILLE

Nashville has been hit by a major tourism slump that's seen hotel tax collections fall almost 19% compared to this time last year. The loss in tourist dollars is quite high and while a portion of those losses are being put down to bad weather, the closing of Opryland theme park is seen as being mainly responsible.

REDEVELOPMENT STARTS

Still on Opryland, the first signs of new life have moved into the old theme park. Cranes moved a 36-ton bridge into place last month, giving visitors a direct link from the parking lot to the area near the Opry House. While the park is gone, the carousel still stands and is expected to be part of a 40-acre family attraction area. The project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2000.

CALL FOR MORE ATTENDANTS

There's been a call for more attendants around Water Parks following the jailing of an Oklahoma City man for fondling five girls aged between five to eleven at the White Water Bay Theme Park in Oklahoma City. Crowded Water Park facilities do provide opportunity for this type of lowlife behaviour unfortunately and more visible attendants may prevent it. The Oklahoma grub, David Hines, is charged with five counts of indecent and lewd acts with children in late July and is expected to be severely dealt with by the Courts.

PREMIER PARKS ACTIVE

Premier Parks, the very active **park** company, are whacking new rides in everywhere, 3 notable rides are:

(1) A new, big and very "coaster" style ride from S&S Sports, which the company will launch at this years IAAPA for their Elitch Gardens Park in Denver, Colorado. Not only is this ride said to be something very special, it will use the traditional S&S Air Power system instead of the expensive LIM/LSM system. - (2) A Premier Rides LIM coaster similar to the Mad Cobra coaster that opened in Japan earlier this year and which has been doing incredible business for Geauga Lake Park in Ohio. - (3) And a Giovanola HyperCoaster for Six Flags Magic Mountain which could be the biggest Hypercoaster ever built, this one will start near the Psyclone, travel over Riddler & Batman, turn, do a U-turn over Colossus before heading back to the station again .

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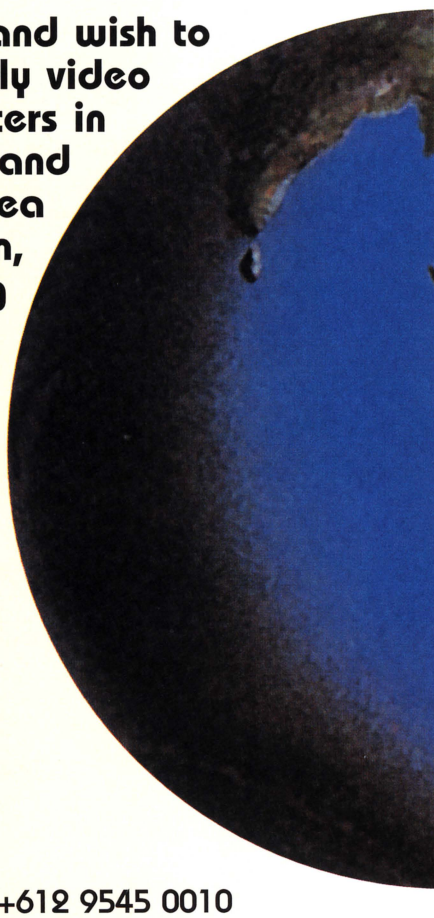

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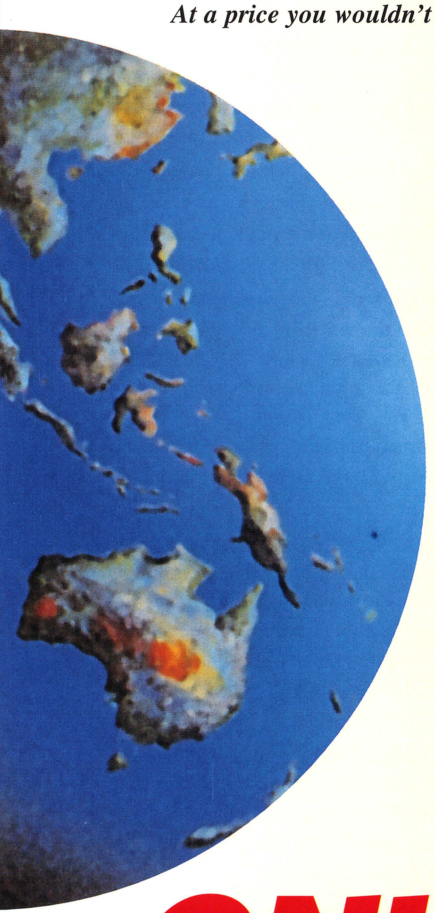

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Tiger Attack

The USA's Marine World Park promotion in which guests have their picture taken with Bengal Tigers has been cancelled following a woman suffering serious injuries when she fell off a platform during the picture shoot, and the tiger took a few chunks out of her. 45 year old Jannell Waldo lost her balance and fell off the platform while she was having her picture taken with the 2-year-old Bengal tiger named Kuma as a birthday present, and the tiger responded in the only way it knew how, it chomped on her a bit.

Waldo, not now the tiger lover that she once was, suffered scratches and bites to her head, neck, back and chest and was taken to a nearby hospital to be stitched up - she's OK, but Kuma is in the sin bin for a goodly stretch.

Wedding Has Its Ups And Downs

A young couple, Alan Renner and Julie McAdoo got married last month, and few people scream as loud on their wedding day. The couple were the 'winners' of a radio station contest that's 'prize' was a wedding on the platform of the Steel Phantom roller coaster (pictured) at Kennywood. After they said "I do" the dopes got to take a front seat ride with the bridal party behind them, and all had a nice old yodel.

New South African Park

The biggest theme park on the African continent is rising from a 22-hectare (54-acre) quagmire on the outskirts of Cape Town and will open its doors to the public in just over four months time. The 330 million-rand ($54 million) Ratanga Junction amusement park, billed as the first full-scale theme park in Africa, will offer everything from white-knuckle rides for the daring to the more sedate carousel for children and romantics. Samples of food from all over Africa -- as well as the ubiquitous pizza -- will add to more than 30 attractions on offer, including 24 rides and, for good measure, real snakes and crocodiles, though safely shielded from the visitors.

``*This is a mixture of the best ideas from theme parks all over the world,*'' said Maggie Rowley, spokeswoman for the owners Monex Ltd, who anticipate some 2.5 million visitors a year. ``*It will offer entertainment for everyone from three to 83.*''

Watching workers slipping and sliding under torrential rain on a recent tour of the site, it was hard to visualise just how the transformation will take place in time for opening on December 4, at the height of the southern hemisphere summer.

For the adventurous there will be the Cobra -- a roller coaster built by Vekoma that rises to a height of 34 metres (110 feet) where the rider sits in a chair suspended underneath the rails and is taken on a two-minute journey reaching speeds of 85 kilometres (53 miles) an hour and pressures of up to four times gravity.

Next door is Blackfever Falls which offers the rider the chance to float in a make-believe dugout canoe over three waterfalls rising in height progressively from a mere five metres (16 feet) to a more nerve-wracking 11 metres (36 feet) and finally a giddying 18.5 metres (60 feet) -- much of the latter in the dark. At the other end of the park is a white water raft ride called rapid river with a real Dakota aircraft -- the former workhorse of the African bush -- supposedly crashed into the middle of the croc-infested jungle.

Australia

Leisure Trusts Could Provide Investors With a Hairy Ride

New property trusts based on leisure assets seem to be the big 'go' in Australia this year. Three have been launched to raise more than $350 million so far and there's apparently more to come, but they seem to be stretching things a bit by calling them "Property Trusts"

In conventional wisdom, property trusts are underpinned by secure, long-term income streams - less exciting than many investments but less risky and less volatile. However in sectors like tourism and leisure, the return to the trust is far more linked to the day-to-day operation of the business, and if the businesses running on the property owned by the trust aren't performing profitably, the property, or the trust, aren't worth very much at all.

But the punters are still 'biting', the first of the new leisure offerings - the $123 million Village Entertainment Property Trust (9.2% yield) and the $128 million MTM Entertainment Trust (9.8% yield) were both very strongly subscribed, giving the impression that the next one to be listed, the LeisureWide Property Trust (10.3% yield) would also do well. But LeisureWide - a $102 million offering from Macquarie Bank that incorporates one of Australia's premier theme parks, Dreamworld on the Gold Coast - seems a very different proposition.

Investment return on LeisureWide is essentially linked to net profit, a figure that reflects the volatility of the tourist market and the capital expenditure required to maintain and improve Dreamworld.

For several years those returns have all been positive. In the year to June 1996 attendance rose 4.8% to over 1 million, and earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA), rose 25.6 %. Last year the attendance and the average spend was up again and EBITDA rose 14.3%. However, Dreamworld has been hit by the fall in Asian tourism this year and if the trust had owned the property, revenue would have dropped by more than 11%.

Stephen Girdis, head of Macquarie Property Funds Management, argues the downturn is a short-term opportunity to acquire assets and that by 2000 tourism to Australia will be surging again. Girdis also argues that theme parks are no more capital-intensive than other property investments like shopping centres. Dreamworld has required capital expenditure of $5 to $14 million in recent years.

Dreamworld differs from traditional property trusts in another respect. A new entity, Omni Leisure Operations, will take a five-year lease on the park and run the operation. It will employ the current top management; be owned 40% by trust investors, 38% by Macquarie and 22% by the Queensland-based Splash Leisure.

For 1998-99 Macquarie is forecasting a 3.5% increase in attendance, a 2.2% increase in the average spend and a 6% increase in EBITDA to offer investors a forecast 10.3% return, but these figures don't look attainable in the current climate. DreamWorld is a great park, but it can't earn the sort of money Macquarie is talking about with out paying customers.

LeisureWide could easily provide a 'hairier' ride than Dream Worlds fantastic Tower of Terror.....*and that's very 'hairy' indeed.*

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They Go Higher And Higher.

Getting a bit ancient probably has something to do with it, but this writer can't figure out why people that look relatively sane, stand in lines for half a day to get dropped from a great height - or maybe hurled up to a great height.

But they do - and in quite incredible numbers all round the world, making the Turbo Drop type of ride built by S&S POwer and others, second only to the hyper coasters in park popularity. The beast pictured is at Knotts Berry Farm in California, and it's around thirty storeys high, and the built in desire that big park owners have, to own 'the highest' or 'the fastest' ride, will ensure that by the turn of the century we will have one of these animals somewhere around 50 storeys, or 500 feet high - that's if there are any regulators out there who will let them build it.

There's already talk of this 500 foot high monster being planned, the engineers are probably working on it now, and if that's the case, some clown is thinking about a 550 foot high one - but come on - 500 feet is getting into Boeing 747 country - the only times man should go 500 foot up into the air is to go to the 50th floor of the swishest building in town to see a lawyer, or to be going somewhere in a Jumbo - not going up to get dropped.

The old guy up top who made us, must be shaking his head wondering how we possibly went so wrong - probably thinking he may as well bring on the Acopolypse now, rather than wait till 2000 - it wouldn't matter to crazy people when the end of the world came, would it.

What brought this on? Well, our little grandguy wanted to get on one of the rotten things at Australia Wonderland, (only a miserable 15 or so storeys high) and he wanted his Pop to get on with him didn't he.....*and Pop gave thanks to God when it was found the little guy was about a foot too short to be allowed on, didn't he.*

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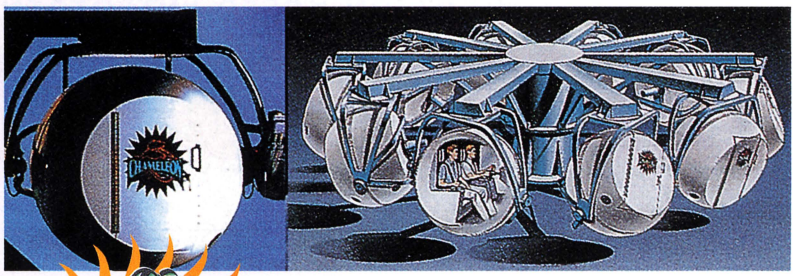

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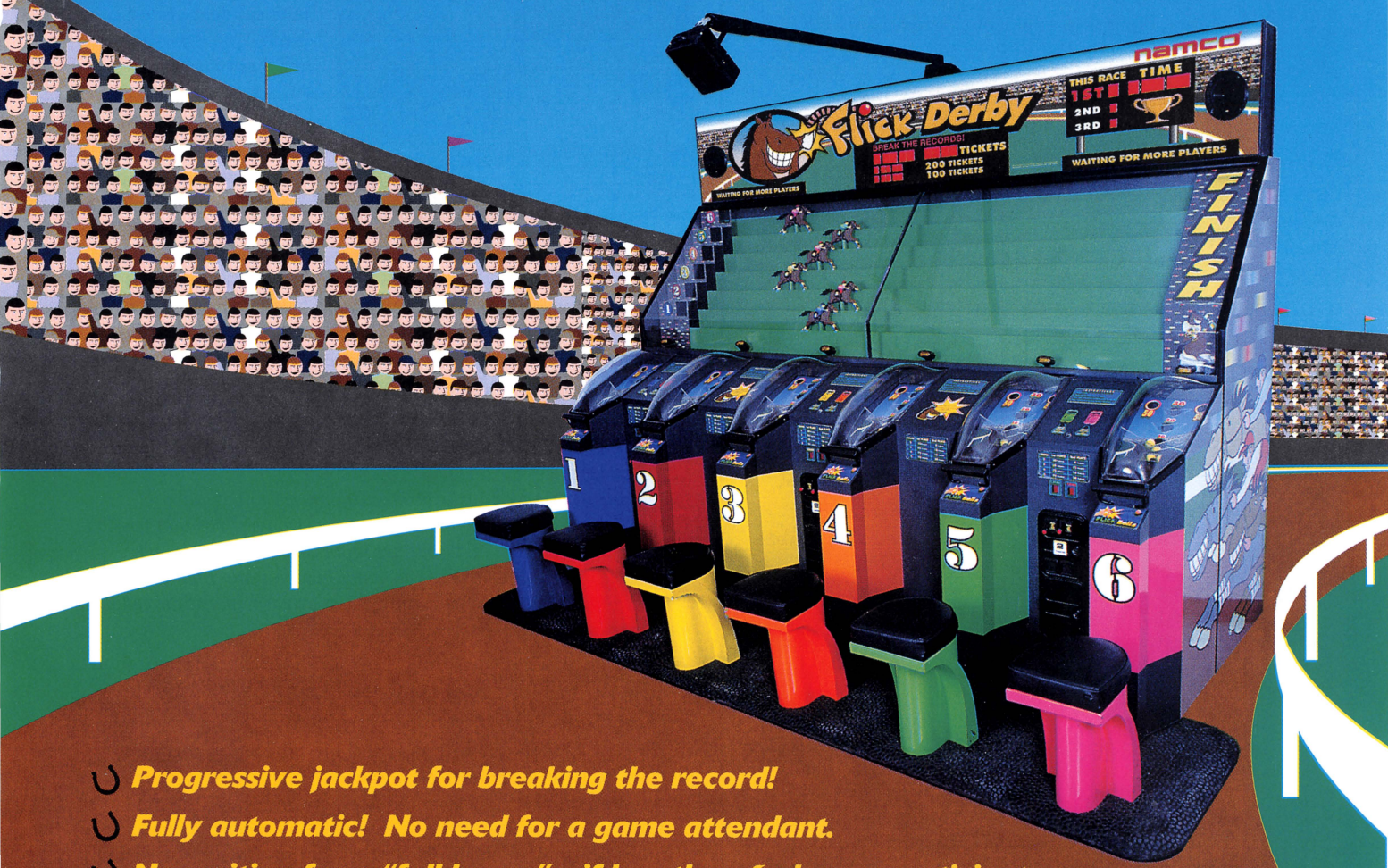

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MAXFLIGHT

CYBERCOASTER HITS UNION STATION

When the St Louis Union Station first opened in 1894, no one dreamed of Virtual Reality, but now, over a century later, VR, in the shape of a MaxFlight VR2002 - the world's only, customer programmable roller coaster simulator - is all that most people in St Louis can talk about.

Installed in the 170,000 square foot, Union Station Shopping mall, considered the #1 destination in St Louis, the VR2002 has an annual eight million visitors to draw from, and as could be expected, it's going non-stop.

Sheppard Ross, the manager of the Cyber Coaster kiosk is ecstatic with the response the VR2002 has received since it was installed,

tourists, which make up about 60% of those visiting the mall are flocking to it, and the repeat business from locals is way above expectations.

Mall management is even happier, reporting greatly increased activity on the second level which had been quiet, with one tenant situated near the ride posting a 15% increase in business since the ride opened. As well as St Louis, CyberCoasters have recently been installed in Canada's huge West Edmonton mall and a Sega site in California.

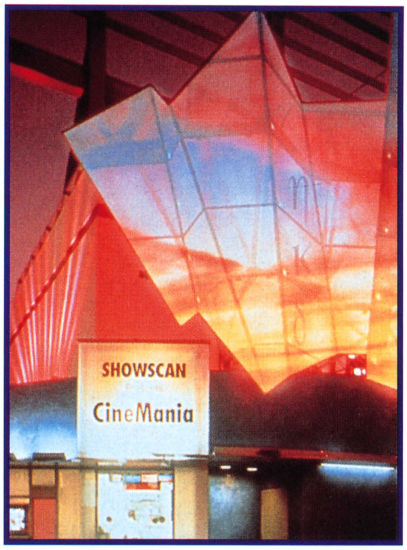
NEW PARK CONCEPT

CINEMATEC - PARK OF THE MOVING IMAGE

Welcome to a new concept in Theme Parks, 'Cinematec - Park of the Moving Image'. To be built near Miami, Florida, Cinematec is a long way from being a conventional theme park with stacks of hair raising rides to choose from, instead it's a park dedicated to the art of film in all its many formats over past years, as well as future formats.

While at first this may sound like a museum, it's actually much more than that. As well as viewing old restored films, visitors will be able to view new films in a large 14-screen multiplex, plus experience a stack of other film formats like IMAX-3D, OmniMAX, IMAX-HD, IMAX Solido, Imagine 360, Toruscope 360, Toruscope 180, Toruscope 1220, Toruscope-VR.

And it doesn't stop with passive film viewing, visitors can also ride as well, in a series of different types of simulators, both capsule and theatre, that include Iwerks-TurboTour, Showscan, IMAX Ridefilm, and the new Toruscope motion simulator. Add a bit of Virtual Reality and four or five restaurants, including one of the large rotating tower type, and you've got a big day out.



SHOWSCAN PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Showscan Entertainment Inc have reported a net loss of $8,532,000, on sales of $10,414,000 for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1998, compared with a net loss for the comparable period a year ago of $3,919,000, on sales of $17,711,000.

The company said that the reduction in sales was related to a significant slowdown in new sales orders as a result of confusion in the marketplace over the Showscan/Iwerks merger announced in August 1997. Additionally, there was a decrease in film revenues related to the closure of certain owned and operated theatres and the condition of the various economies in Asia.

Dennis Pope, president and CEO said: *"Over the past year, Showscan and, in fact, its primary constituencies, current customers and sales prospects, have focused on the sale or merger of the company. Since the failure of the Showscan/Iwerks merger, I have, with senior management, prepared a new strategic approach to revitalise Showscan, return it to profitability and the strongest position possible in the industry. However, it will not be an easy road that we take. Management has also resolved the major business and financial issues primarily responsible for the fiscal 1998 loss and prepared the company for a new beginning".*

Looking toward the future, Pope outlined the strategy that he believes will return the company to profitability and ultimately enhance shareholder value:-

- Showscan will market their simulation thrill-ride library to all operators of simulation attractions, either in conjunction with, or as a replacement for, the films they are now showing. To this end, the company are in the process of converting their thrill-ride library to film formats other than Showscan's for distribution to these prospective customers.
- In anticipation of market demand for 3D films, the company are also converting portions of their thrill-ride library into a 3-D format.
- As well as the 3D, the company will convert a portion of their thrill-ride library to DVD or similar formats, thus taking advantage of the newer technologies.
- Showscan plan to expand business lines. A first step in this expansion will be the company's strategic relationship with Spitz Inc, one of the world's largest and most respected planetarium companies. The initial agreement with Spitz, to provide sales services, is for China and will be expanded to other regions of the world.
- And finally, Showscan will actively explore entry into the video game market, as well as film development, based on concepts now existing in its simulation library.

It's been a hard year for Showscan, but the feeling within the company is that they can now get back on the rails and return to profit in the relative short term.

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Actual scene from VR2002 Roller Coaster, viewed from above the virtual riders position.

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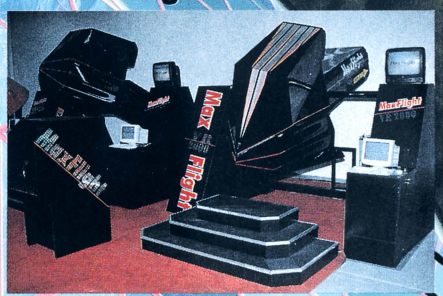
VR2002 Roller Coaster

Passengers can build their own virtual roller coaster using a library of ever-expanding track segments, then experience for themselves the wildest ride of their life! The maximum ride length is fully customizable. Experience the hottest indoor attraction on the planet!

VR2000 Flight Simulator



The pilot is in control. Fly loops and barrel rolls, go into vertical dives and climbs, and more, in this single passenger ride. Games currently available allow unit-to-unit combat, racing and individual play. Network the games with other sites and compete with players from around the world! Also available is an interactive stand-up training console networkable with the flight simulators.

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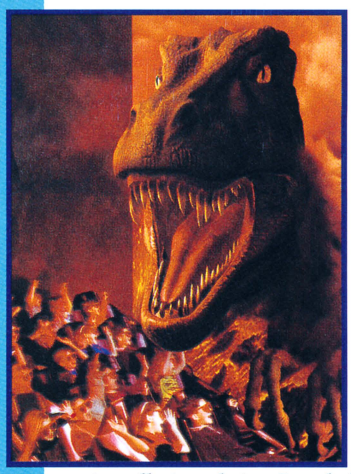
SIMULATION & MOTION THEATRES

Two Big Iwerks Projects For Colombia And Brazil



Iwerks Entertainment Inc have opened South America's first large-format theatre in Bogota, Colombia. An Iwerks CineDome 8/70 Theatre system is featured at Maloka -- Centro Interactivo de Ciencia y Technologia, an interactive science center that opened last month and Iwerks will also open South America's second large-format theatre system at Parque Tematico Playcenter in Brazil by April 1999, a deal that was announced last September.

These two theatre installations bring Iwerks' total number of worldwide large-format theatre installations to 43, with seven in development.

Maloka Science and Interactive Center of Colombia is South America's largest science and technology center. The center is comprised of various interactive exhibits that teach about technology, biodiversity, the universe, city, kids, life, human life, and features an Internet Cafe.

Maloka opened its science center with a 314-seat theatre with a giant screen dome projection system. The dome screen creates an immersive experience and draws the audience into the film by fully surrounding them with larger than life images and state-of-the-art sound. Iwerks provided all elements of the theatre and its installation, including the projection system, screen, digital sound system and theatre engineering and design.

Parque Tematico Playcenter, (Adventure Park), in Vinhedo, Brazil, will have South America's second large-format theatre. The theatre will use a 370-seat Iwerks 8/70 Linear Loop 3D projection system, accompanying two 70-seat Iwerks TurboRide simulation theatres, which the park acquired last year.

Thomson Entertainment

Jerry Monday To Rep USA

Thomson Entertainment nt have put themselves in a good position for an increased share of the US Simulator market, with the appointment of Jerry Monday as their US representative. Few people have a wider knowledge of coin-op than Jerry, having in his more than 30 years in the business, held key positions in companies like Betson and Nintendo, operated his own distribution business, operated a large mall route, and more recently worked in the Spirit Design Group, an FEC design and consultancy business, run by he and his wife, Sue. We'd say Thomson have done pretty good with this move.

Selling Iceboxes To Eskimos

Thomson have got a big boost to their US sales with the sale of Venturer S2 Interactive machines, equipped with the Millennium Odyssey game, to Namco and Sega, not only two of the biggest operators in the world, but also of course the manufacturers of a diverse range of amusement equipment. The S2's were installed in Namco Treasure Island in Las Vegas, and Gameworks in Grapevine, Texas.

New Products

Thomson are set to launch three new products before the end of the year and it's expected that all will be seen at IAAPA in November. The products are a totally new capsule simulator, the Ventura VXL, and two new compact theatre systems, the Ventura T4, a four seat platform on three axis, and the T10, a 10 seat platform on six axis. More on these products later.

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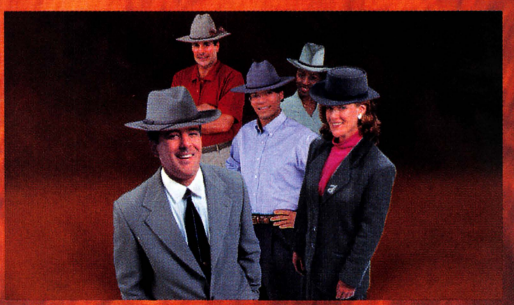

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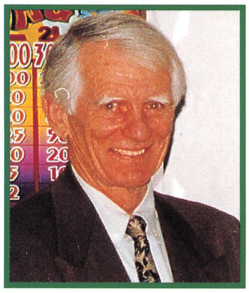


Editorial

Jack Rodios

The opening of the $US 1.6 billion ($AUD2.7 billion), 3,000 room Bellagio hotel casino resort in Las Vegas next month is the start of a period that will see some 20,000 hotel rooms added to the current 100,000 ..... at a time when Americans are visiting the desert wonderland far less frequently.

There are numerous surveys and investigations into why Vegas seems to be loosing it's appeal, being carried out by accountants and academics, but none of these people appear to frequent the real world and Vegas casino owners may be better served by talking to real people.

The eggheads keep telling them they have to build bigger resorts that cater for the family with heaps of expensive, non-gambling entertainment attractions, to compete with the many other casinos now operating in almost every state. And the casino operators have poured billions of dollars into doing that, only to see profits keep falling.....

A talk to real people would tell them that their profits are falling because the people who made Las Vegas what it is, and kept pouring gambling dollars in year after year - are not coming there anymore - or at best anywhere near as frequently - and those who are coming, are gambling considerably less.

It would tell them that punters don't necessarily want to take the whole family to Las Vegas, they go their to gamble - taking the bride is fine, wives can get into the machines, but having a bunch of kids around him in Las Vegas when all he wants to do is gamble, is not what a punter sees as fun.

And the real people would also tell the casino operators that if they did bring the family, it would cost that much that they wouldn't have any money left to punt - because the Vegas that exists today, has lost it's biggest assets - good cheap accommodation, good cheap food, and good cheap entertainment.

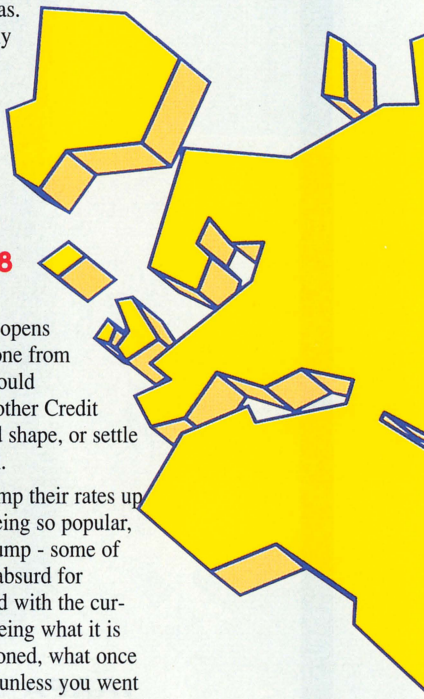
Vegas was built on those principals with old time casino operators knowing they would get the bikkies available anyway, and make big profits from the gaming tables and machines - no matter what else you say of the old operators, and wether they were Mafia or not - they were not over greedy - they were prepared to give to receive - but that can't be said of today's casino owners - they are greedy, very greedy - the now corporatised Vegas wants it at both ends, with in some cases, absurdly high costs for accommodation food and entertainment, and they still expect patrons to give them high gambling revenues.

Give this colt the mobsters any day, they're gentlemen compared to corporate greed.

International Casino Exhibition '99
Changes At ICE Make For Better Show

Visitors to the International Casino Exhibition '99 held in London in January who were there this year will notice a marked difference in the layout of the Show. The organisers have responded to feedback from visitors and exhibitors and reshaped the floor plan into a more traditional block and grid pattern after they learned that many buyers found the 1998 Show "hard to shop"

According to Paul Grinnall of ICE Sales, the new layout will give the Show a fresh look, and help to spread the flow of traffic more evenly by reducing congestion in key areas. Major exhibitors have unanimously approved the changes, and the ten biggest have also increased their exhibition space by an average of 27%, ensuring the Show will not only be more 'user friendly', but quite a bit larger as well



World Gaming Congress '98
Polish Up the Amex

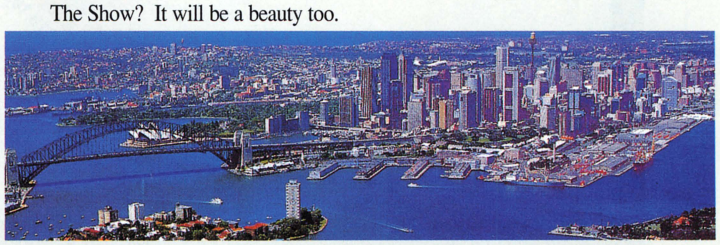
The World Gaming Congress opens next month in Las Vegas and anyone from Asia or Australasia going there should make sure the old Amex and any other Credit Cards they have are in pretty good shape, or settle for an 'el cheapo' downtown hotel.

Every Strip hotel in Vegas bump their rates up for conventions, but with WGC being so popular, they're giving them a real good bump - some of the prices we've been quoted are absurd for Vegas, (like over $200 a night) and with the currency exchange against the US$ being what it is for people from the regions mentioned, what once used to be a relatively cheap trip (unless you went beresk on the tables) is going to cost the proverbial 'arm and a leg'. For an Australian for example, that $US 200 a night is going to cost around $AUD330.00 - probably plus tax.

Australasian Gaming Expo '98
New Casino Facing Opposition

Conversely to the item above, Americans and Europeans travelling to Sydney for the Australasian Gaming Expo, will have an exceptionally cheap trip, with the exchange rate the way it is, it's bargain time even if the hotel owners slug you. And the best part of the bargain is that you will see probably the most beautiful city in the world - sure we're biased, but Sydney has always been a beautiful city on any standards, and with the Government spending our dollars like there's no tomorrows, on the coming Olympics, it's something really special now.

The Show? It will be a beauty too.



Sports Betting
The Big Mover

While betting on Soccer has long been established in South East Asia, it took a while, for the punters to really get into general sports betting, but they're into it now in such a big way with the aid of the Internet and better all round communications, that it has to be the biggest mover in the region.

On a recent trip to Singapore and Indonesia we were inundated with questions on Rugby League, Basketball, and sundry other sports from punters that knew all about 'spreads' and the like, but knew little about the sports they were betting on, and were thirsty for any snippet of information that could possibly give them a bit of an edge. The spend per head on sports betting in Australia must also be on the rise and we'd have to think the recently privatised NSW TAB are on a winner with their move into it.

United States
New LV Airline

Two Las Vegas casino companies are to start their own low-cost airline, with ticket prices claimed to be up to 30% cheaper than other airlines.

Harrah's Entertainment and Rio Hotel & Casino will each invest US$15m, in addition to outside financing. The companies say that the move is in response to the larger airlines who have reduced the number of flights to Las Vegas to concentrate on the business-travel routes. The new airline, to be called National Airlines, will use Boeing 757s and hopes to achieve cost savings with lower labour costs. Gambling will not take place on board, because it is illegal in US airspace, but the company hopes to be able to offer frequent-flyer programme and services such as the delivery of customer luggage directly to the casino.

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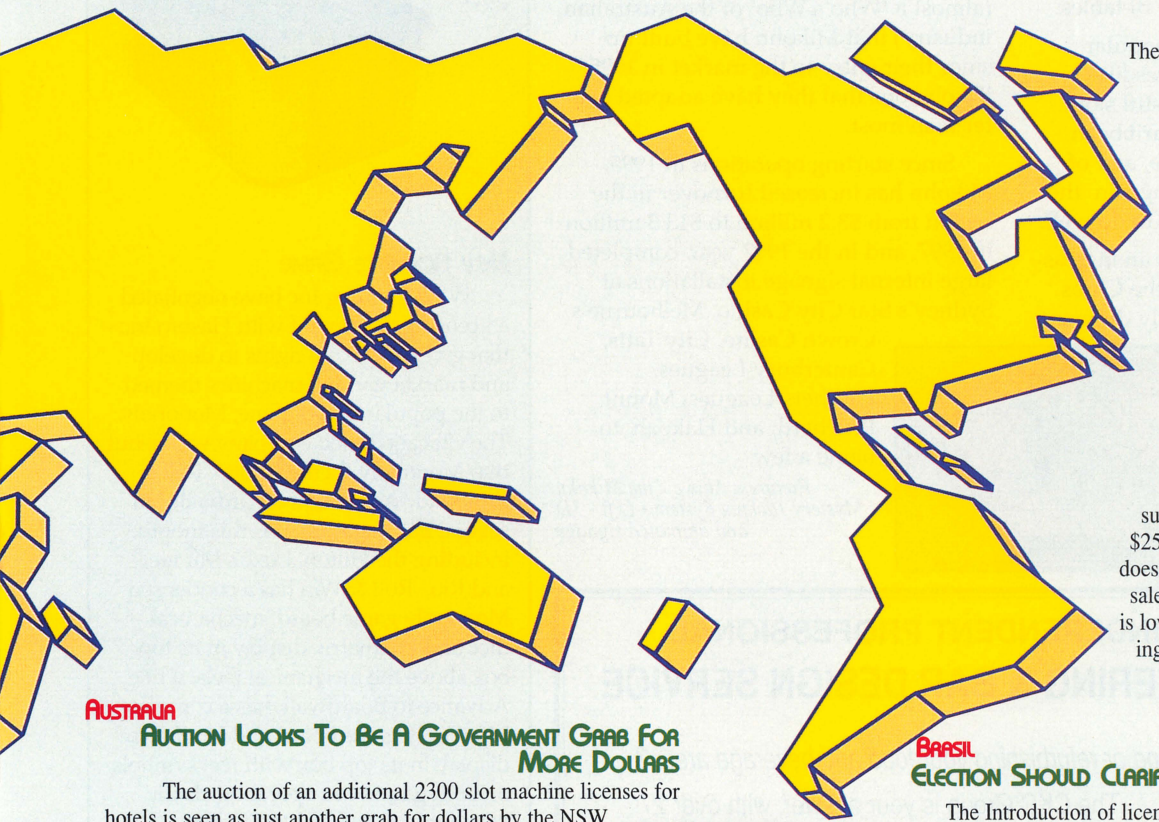
GAMING IN THE REAL WORLD
WWF ATTITUDE COMES TO VEGAS
CROWN SINKS LOWER

United States
IGT and Elvis Team Up

The Bellagio room reservations office opened on April 20 and recently completed its first 100 days of accepting reservations. During this period and despite the lack of any advertising, over twice as many reservations have been placed for Bellagio as was the case over the comparable preopening time periods for the Company's Mirage and Treasure Island resorts and with convention and wholesale bookings, all rooms are reportedly booked for the next 12 months.

The average rate for rooms and suites booked through front office is $258 per night and while this number doesn't include convention and wholesale bookings and the overall average is lower, both the volume and the pricing of room reservations to date substantially exceed the Company's expectations.



Australia
Auction Looks To Be A Government Grab For More Dollars

The auction of an additional 2300 slot machine licenses for hotels is seen as just another grab for dollars by the NSW Government and the AHA are demanding a more equitable way of allotting the licenses. They are not impressed with the figures in a merchant bank report that the Government are intimating they will use, to establish a reserve price for the auction - the published report says 14 leading hotels are earning $56,000 profit on each machine.

Punters aren't too keen on what they read either, as further in the report they found there was more to it than that. Each machine in these hotels earned gross profit of $160,000 after player payouts - of this, the NSW Government got $64,000, or 40% in duty, $8,000 per machine was allocated to 'operating costs' and the Federal Government got $56,000 in corporate tax, before the publicans got their $56,300. *"We're a bunch of bloody idiots"* said one machine player we questioned, as he whacked another $20 note in the slot.

The over-riding argument however - that NSW needs an extra 2300 machines like it needs another term of the present Government, is getting plenty of 'air-play', and does have a bit of merit - after all the state probably has a higher rate of machines per head than Las Vegas, already.

Brasil
Election Should Clarify Casino & Gaming Issues

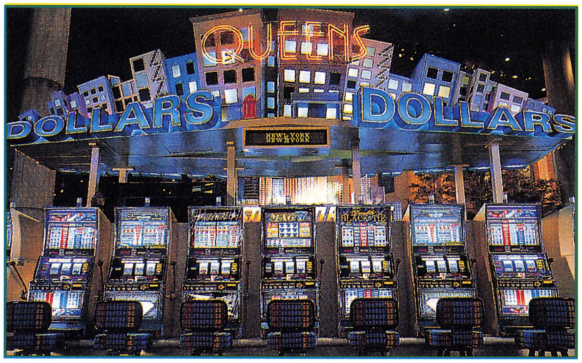
The Introduction of licensed casinos in Brasil now appears likely as the church and other opposition forces wilt under the number of slots going onto the street. Talk is that they will do a 'trade off' with the Government during the coming general election that will see licensed casinos get approval in select areas, and slot machines removed from the street, after the election.

There are great problems on the street with a huge proliferation of slot machines of all types, and to date, the Government have seemed incapable of stopping it - or they haven't wanted to. Everywhere you look in Sao Paulo, and we're told other cities are the same, there's slot machines, and our understanding of the situation is that all except electronic Bingo machines in licensed Bingo halls are technically illegal to operate.

The slots are causing hardship and family breakdowns as they grab the Brasilians who are generally battling, in a very tight economy, and sitting on the wharves of Sao Paulo are apparently, another 32 large containers full of slot machines, Spanish and Australian made, basically waiting for the owners to agree on the amount to be paid, and on who the money will be paid to, before they are put out onto the street. It's not good, and on what we've seen, we'd have to back the church on this one.

AUSTRALIA

MIKOHN GAMING TO INTRODUCE SAFEJACK AT AGE '98

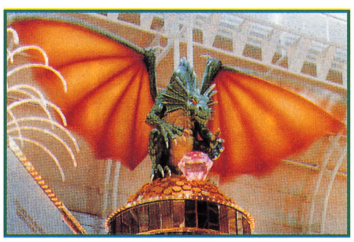


Mikohn Gaming, one of the big movers in the Australasian gaming market will introduce 'SafeJack' their patented Black Jack system at this months Australasian Gaming Expo.

SafeJack brings computer control, player tracking and security against both cheating and dealer error to Black Jack, it has been approved in major US jurisdictions like Nevada, and is being taken up by a stack of big name casinos where all are reporting improved earnings from the BJ tables.

SafeJack will join other popular Mikohn products and services like CasinoLink, the very successful slot machine tracking system, Caribbean Stud, the popular table game, and of course their distinctive signage, in the Oz market and it's expected to do well.

The Australian market is an increasingly sophisticated market, the Clubs and Hotels of today are vastly different to those of just a few years ago, and Australian casinos are the equal of all, but a few of the big new casinos in Las Vegas.



Companies servicing the industry have had to adapt to these changes rapidly, and looking at the clientele, (almost a 'Who's Who' of the Australian industry) that Mikohn have built up since their entry to the market in 1995, it's obvious that they have adapted better than most.

Since starting operations in 1995, Mikohn has increased turnover in the region from $3.2 million to $13.5 million in 1997, and in the 1997 year, completed large internal signage installations at Sydney's Star City Casino, Melbourne's Crown Casino, City Tatts, Canterbury Leagues, Panthers Leagues, Mount Pritchard, and Hakoah, to name a few.

Pictures: Above - the Mikohn Mystery Jackpot System • Left - 3D and animated signage

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NEW ROULETTE GAME

Innovative Gaming Corporation of America, makers of multi player Roulette and Blackjack games, have purchased the patent and technology to develop a new mechanical revolving rings roulette game. The company say the unique, single player game will be the first of its kind in the market.

The mechanical revolving rings roulette game incorporates a number of rings, each with winning apertures, playing to escalating award levels. With the multiple rings, the game has the potential for large jackpots.

NEW ROULETTE GAME

WMS Gaming Inc have negotiated a licensing agreement with Hasbro Inc that gives WMS the rights to develop and market gaming machines themed to the popular board game, Monopoly. The Chicago based company will debut two Monopoly themed slots, "Roll & Win" and "Advance to Boardwalk" in several Las Vegas casinos this month, including the Hilton, Luxor, Mirage, and Rio. Roll & Win has a condensed Monopoly game board, mechanical dice and Dotmatrix display in its top box above the mechanical reels, while Advance to Boardwalk has a complete Monopoly game board and Dotmatrix display in its top box with reel symbols on both games incorporating classic Monopoly elements like Chance, Community Chest, etc.

WIN ONE - LOSE ONE

Shuffle Master Inc lost a round in their Court battle with Progressive Games Inc (PGI) who are suing them for Patent infringement on the "Let It Ride Bonus" table game, when a New Jersey Court ordered them to stop operating the game in an Atlantic City Casino, but they won the next round, when the Court ordered the matter be transferred to Mississippi where eight other cases are in progress.....and where the Mississippi Court had earlier denied a similar PGI motion, and ruled that Shuffle Master could operate the game. No wonder US lawyers are always grinning.

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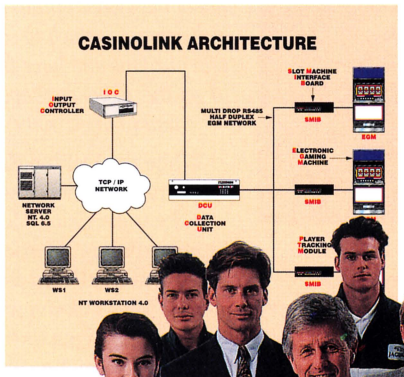

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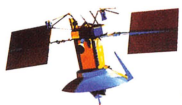


INTERNET CASINOS

$2 MILLION NET SCAM

In what looks to be the first of many such actions to be played out around the world, and in the USA in particular, New York State is planning to sue an Internet gambling company for a scam that cost 100 odd investors close to $2 million. Attorney General Dennis Vacco has notified World Interactive Gaming Corp and its officers that they are the targets of a lawsuit for running an allegedly illegal Internet gambling casino.

The New York based gaming company apparently used unregistered salespeople to sell shares in its Internet gambling casino, Golden Chips Casino, and sort of stretched the truth a tad, by telling the dopey investors, they could *"easily turn a miserable $10,000 investment into $157,000 profit in one year"* And there are reportedly several other scams of this nature being investigated in the USA.

Targeting natural greed rarely fails, and it didn't fail this time with over $2 million being tipped into the bucket, and apparently World interactive were just getting warmed up. Needless to say, the investors have got absolutely zilch in return.

The State can't sue directly for the $2 million odd on behalf of the investors, but because Internet gambling is illegal in New York and prohibited by the Federal Wire Communications Act, they can seek to permanently stop World Interactive from doing business in New York, and then demand the payment of restitution for the investors, civil penalties and costs, when they get that order made.

Totally predictably, officials at World Interactive were not immediately available for comment.

WINNER OF THE MONTH

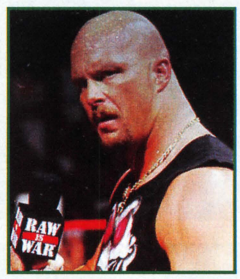
WWF TAKES DEBBIE REYNOLDS CASINO

The once farcical World Wrestling Federation (WWF) is currently one of the most successful entertainment promotions in the world, with up to seven sell-out performances a week, around the USA, and their unexpected purchase of the Debbie Reynolds hotel-casino last month, is taking them into Vegas.

It didn't come easy however as they had to up their offer twice to buy the property out of Bankruptcy, once to placate creditors concerned they weren't getting enough money, and once to out-bid David Siegel, a Florida time-share developer interested in the resort since early this year.

At the end of the day, the WWF's $10.65 million offer for the Debbie Reynolds was the high bid, edging Siegel by $100,000, and outpacing an offer the WWF made at a public auction by $1.4 million.

WWF representatives remained evasive about their plans for the resort. *"Las Vegas is the entertainment capital of the world and definitely our audience,"* Vince McMahon, chairman of the WWF, said in a statement released after the hearing. *"Through our worldwide television network ... we will promote the World Wrestling Federation Hotel & Casino as well as Las Vegas as nobody else can. Our theme hotel, casino and restaurant will attract our fans not only from the United States and Canada, but also from around the world. We are confident that the hotel and casino is a logical expansion of the WWF brand, It's a new venue in which to entertain our fans and have them participate. We are anxious to get the plans developed for renovation of the property and to inject some WWF attitude into Las Vegas."*



While the Debbie Reynolds has struggled, as the property did when it was the PaddleWheel Casino, the wily Vince McMahon looks to have got his company a good buy. The property has 193 rooms, 6,600-square feet of casino space, about four acres of extra land, and a pretty good off strip position near the Las Vegas Convention Centre. It will need to be brushed up a bit, and have a few hundred more rooms added to get it's full casino license, but when themed to the incredibly popular WWF, it could turn into a top investment as the place won't be short of customers with millions of WWF fans to draw from.

Just having a few celebrities like The Undertaker,(pictured above left) Kane, and Steve Austin (above right), around the place 'injecting a bit of WWF attitude' should hustle up enough dollars to make sure this property doesn't see the Bankruptcy Court again.

LATE NEWS

The WWF lodged their deposit for the Debbie Reynolds on time and that should have been that..... but after going home and seeing Debbie Reynolds singing 'Tammy' on the TV, under bidder David Seigal has decided he *"has to have the property"*, and has made application for the Court to set aside the WWF bid and it's acceptance, and consider his new bid of $11.5 million. Opinions are mixed on whether the Judge will reopen the matter or not, as it's not often done. The WWF are obviously fighting it vigorously, but Seigals $11.5 million bid pays out all creditors completely and they are on his side.

LATER NEWS

Looks like it's going to be a real saga this one - the Judge gave Seigal the flick, but that's still not the end of it as he's now going to appeal the whole thing to a higher Court.

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AUSTRALIA

CHRISTMAS ISLAND CASINO AGAIN IN FINANCIAL TROUBLE

Once the favoured resort of South East Asia's high rollers, Christmas Island Casino has suffered from the proliferation of casinos on the Australian mainland over the past couple of years, and there now has to be a question mark over it's future, following the latest development that sees the property in receivership and no 'White Knight' in sight.

Robby Sumampow, the Indonesian who bought a controlling interest in the resort, but has since been hard hit by the economic crisis in Indonesia, failed to meet a deadline set by the Australian Government to pay off debts including $1.4 million owing in unpaid wages to 300 former casino staff, which was a condition in the purchase agreement, and early last month, the Australian Government pulled the plug on the deal and cancelled the casino's license.

Hopes that Kerry Packer would bail out the Indonesians, then fell in a hole, after Packer looked over the deal through Perth accountants PPB Ashton Read, who are also handling the receivership, and decided to give it a miss.

What happens with Christmas Island is now anyones guess, but it's future doesn't look too bright.

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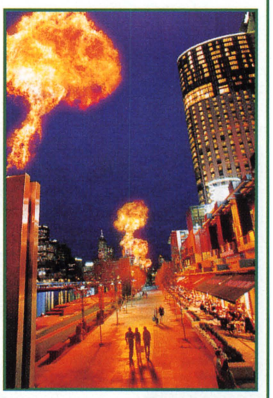
CASINOS

CROWN SLIDES FURTHER



We find this continued Crown Casino crap a bit hard to take and would suggest Lloyd baby gets to hell out of there and puts someone in who is capable of running the place to it's potential. We really thought a share price of 56 cents for Crown Casino was too good to miss and acted accordingly, only to see the bloody price go down to 40 cents at time of writing and threatening to go lower. Current management doesn't appear to have a clue how to arrest the fall - or run the place - they even got ripped for $1.5 million by a flim flam team working with baccarat dealers - where the hell are Hilton or some other take over merchant when you want them?

JACKSON CASINO BID FAILS

As expected, Detroit voters have rejected the referendum to change licensing procedures for casinos in that city supported by riverboat gambling operator Don Barden and entertainer Michael Jackson. Barden and Jackson had proposed building a casino and theme park resort complex in Detroit although Barden's license bid had previously been turned down.

STAR CITY SEEKING LID ON SLOT MACHINES

As the NSW Government prepares to pluck an extra $70 or $80 million from the auction of 2300 new slot machine licenses, Star City Casino are urging them to put a lid on the number of machines operating in the State. The casino are claiming that every new machine that goes into a pub or club, is eroding the value of their very expensive casino license, which is probably right, but we don't think they will get any joy out of the Government, who are laughing their heads off.....having never before got a big whack of money so easy. Star City are also pleading for their 2% 'Problem Gambling Tax' to be cut to 1%, with Clubs and Hotels to pay the other 1%, but we can't see a lot of joy there either.

JUPITERS STILL KING OF OZ CASINOS

The pretenders come and go, but Jupiters on the Gold Coast, is still Australias top performing casino, having kicked back in with a big profit in the second half of the year, and now that both Crown and Star City have had their honeymoons....and failed.....that doesn't look like changing in the foreseeable future.

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On the Strip

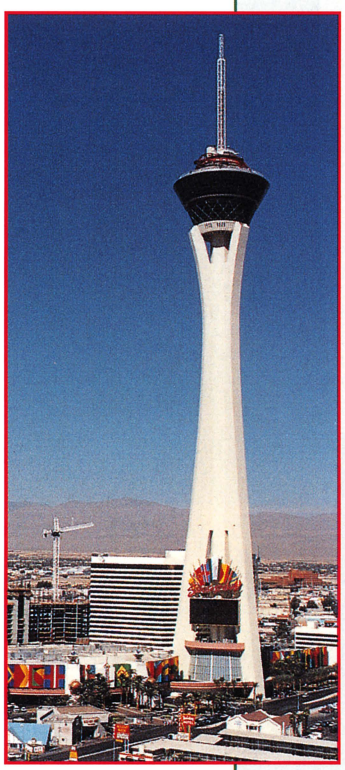
Few would argue that the big US gambling centres like Las Vegas and Atlantic City, dominate the world of casino gaming, and most of what happens there normally has some sort of flow-on into other gaming jurisdictions.

We've found most people in the gaming industry have a genuine interest in these places, and each month Gaming Journal will endeavour to keep you up to date with the fast moving development, power machinations and expansion of Vegas and other major American gaming centres.

Icahn Approved For Stratosphere & Arizona Charlies

Crafty, financier Carl Icahn, has gained preliminary state approval to become the majority shareholder in the Stratosphere hotel-casino in Las Vegas, and will spend a further $70 million to $100 million on completing and upgrading the resort. The hotel rooms and the tower will be completed, a swimming pool will be built and a sports book installed, Icahn told reporters.

His remarks came after the state Gaming Control Board recommended approval of his bid to hold 50.04% of the business, which has been in bankruptcy.



Icahn was also licensed for Arizona Charlie's hotel-casino, now in bankruptcy, but he won't be able to have any decision-making power until fully approved by the state. The state is expected to make that ruling in about two months.

Despite concerns by analysts about the advent of 20,000 more hotel rooms in Las Vegas at a time when growth in the number of airline passengers arriving at McCarran International Airport is flat, Icahn was optimistic.

Talking about the Stratosphere, Icahn said, *"It's a great property. It's in a good position with the tower. It's a good attraction, and I emphasise, we're in at the right price. Some of the casinos on the Strip have just too much debt on them". As you know, I buy things when nobody wants them and in the case of the Stratosphere, nobody wanted it so we were there., Arizona Charlie's was similar. I just go in when they are sort of unpopular. Like, I'm into tobacco now."*

In both cases, Icahn invested in the casinos' notes and converted them to equity interest (just a touch over 50%, so that he'd have control) when the clubs were in bankruptcy court.

And it looks like he's backed a couple of winners, it's commonly accepted that the Stratosphere is a 'steal' at the price Icahn paid, and Gerald Heetland, attorney for Arizona Charlie's, told the board the casino has experienced some of its best trading months ever since it was put into Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The trade creditors have been paid and Heetland said he didn't think Icahn would have to put in any extra cash.

Arizona Charlie's fell into bankruptcy, not because of the Las Vegas business but because of a riverboat construction project in Missouri. The boat was constructed but because of Becker's failure to get licensed there and the unsettled gaming conditions there, it could not be sold. *"People have backed away ... the boat is sitting there. That generated the crisis,"* Heetland said.

STRIPLETS

Crafty Carl Strikes

Becker Gaming, owner of the bankrupt Arizona Charlies resort on Decatur Boulevard, and thought to have succeeded in foiling Carl Icahn's attempt to buy the property out of Bankruptcy, have failed to arrange a loan to pay off the property's creditors by the deadline set by the Court. Becker had seemed all but certain to retain control of Arizona Charlie's when Southern California mortgage lender United Healthcare Financial Services (UHFS) cancelled a $92 million loan. It said Arizona Charlie's cash flow would be insufficient to service the loan, and that a loan should never have been offered. Crafty Carl then got the nod on Charlies, but there's a few that are wondering if he had a word or two with UHFS.

Is it All Being Told ?

In an 8-K report filed with the Securities & Exchange Commission, Circus Circus Enterprises Inc said construction problems at its $950 million Mandalay Bay hotel-casino won't delay the resort's opening or "materially increase" the cost of the project.

Circus said the report was filed *"solely for the purpose of providing an updated description"* of settlement problems that have affected Mandalay Bay during construction. The report said that until work is completed on fixing uneven settling of the structure, which county officials said has sunk from 2 to 17 inches into the earth, *"there can be no assurances that further corrective measures will not be required or, if additional measures are required, as to the cost of such measures or their impact, if any, on the scheduled completion and opening of Mandalay Bay."*

What we and quite a few others are asking however is, are Circus telling everything they know, 17 inches is a hell of a settlement, and when it's an uneven settlement (*'from 2 to 17 inches'*), that joints got big problems - we thought the tilt on the joint in the picture above was just the angle the picture was taken on....but.....

Venetian Spa

Canyon Ranch, which calls itself operator of the world's most elite health resorts, said it will open a SpaClub at the Venetian hotel-casino when the Strip resort is completed next April. The 63,000-square-foot spa and fitness club will be in a Venetian-style garden atop an 11-acre pool deck. It will have massage, skin care and body treatment rooms; gyms and weight rooms; a 40-foot rock climbing wall; therapeutic pools; a Canyon Ranch Cafe; and an indoor swimming pool for water aerobics classes and lap swimming.

Doubts on Planet Hollywood Casino

Despite its July 21 decision to *"evaluate and seek strategic alternatives,"* Planet Hollywood have stated they have no plans to back out of the joint venture with the Aladdin to build a $250 million, 1,000-room music-themed resort on the Las Vegas Strip.

"We're still planning on doing that," Planet Hollywood spokesman Robert Weiner said. The resort, which will face Harmon Avenue towards the back of the Aladdin property, and be called The Sound Republic, will re-brand and use the existing 7,000-seat performing arts theatre already on the property, and will build a new 1,000-person club inside The Sound Republic, scheduled to open in late 2000. Both venues will feature a full spectrum of music acts, and emphasise live entertainment, not memorabilia, Weiner said.

Doubts over Planet Hollywood's future plans stem from a steady fall in profits and share prices over the past year as first-time customers fail to return for follow-up visits to the highly themed restaurants. Falling profits and share prices makes it much harder to borrow money favourably and the Orlando-based company are exploring alternatives to lift the value of their stock, including a re-purchase program. They are also having discussions with potential financial and strategic partners, and if we had to bet, we'd have a little bit on them pulling out of the Aladdin venture despite denials - after all they've been 'gonna' build a casino for about 3 years, with numerous different partners, but still haven't laid a brick.

Bellagio All Set To Go

Nevada casino regulators have recommended a license for Steve Wynn's $1.6 billion Bellagio resort scheduled to open October 15 on the Las Vegas Strip. The Nevada Gaming Commission will have final say on the Bellagio licensing as we go to print, but that should be a formality (if it's not, someone's made a hell of a boo-boo)

The 3,000-room, 36-storey Bellagio is a magnificent property, it's been built on the site of the old Dunes hotel-casino and covers 7 million square feet of space. The property has a nine-acre lake, 1,100 fountains, 16 restaurants, 2,700 slot machines, 139 table games, and of course the affore mentioned 3,000 rooms - *all of which are over-booked for the entire first year of operation, at an average price of around $240 a night.*

When the hotel was announced, the price tag was set at $700 million to $1 billion, but jumped with the addition of amenities such as marble floors, imported brass and imported fabrics. And the $1.6 billion figure the project finished at, doesn't include the $285 million spent by Wynn and his corporation on paintings by Van Gogh, Matisse, Monet, Renoir and others, that will be on display at the resort.

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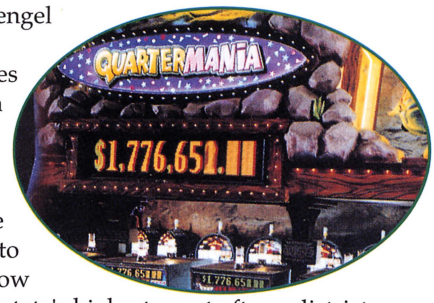


The saga of Cengiz Sengel goes on, and he is really pissed off. Cengy believes it's hard enough to win a jackpot on a slot machine, let alone have to go to the Nevada Supreme Court to get the payoff, and it's hard not to agree with him. He's now appealing his case to the state's highest court after a district court judge gave his argument - that he deserves, and should be paid, a $1.8 million jackpot - the big flick - just as several other bodies have already done..

But Cengy still claims he should have won the money when the jackpot symbols lined up on a QuarterMania machine at Reno's Silver Legacy Resort Casino in September 1996, despite the Nevada Gaming Council's earlier ruling that the jackpot symbols had lined up unevenly and that if the machine had not tilted, Cengy wouldn't have won a razoo - reinforced by Washoe District Court Judge Peter Breen.

And John White, his Reno lawyer, still believes he can get the money for Cengy in the High Court, making it two out of 250 million that think that way.

As observers, we can't help but notice that practically every hassle over an IGT Jackpot, and there's plenty of them, hinge around the Jackpot symbols going to centre line when the machines malfunction or tilt. We've written about a stack of IGT Jackpot hassles and in every case, to memory, the machine has malfunctioned and centre-lined the Jackpot symbols. Would it be that hard for the IGT guru's to programme the machines so that three blanks line up instead of the Jackpot symbols, or is that too simplistic for them. Editor

INTERNET CASINOS

WOMAN SUES VISA FOR BETTING LOSSES

In a US legal battle with far-reaching implications, a woman who racked up more than $70,000 in online gambling losses has countersued credit card companies, accusing them of unfair business practices for granting merchant accounts to Internet casinos, and some experts say the case could be the beginning of the end for Internet casinos.

Cynthia Haines - not a good loser apparently - had herself been sued by San Francisco-based Providian National bank after she failed to make payments on Visa credit card accounts - of which she'd used a dozen different ones - to cover her internet casino, gambling losses through 1997.

Ira Rothken, Haines' lawyer, filed a counter-suit against Providian National Bank, Visa, MasterCard and 50 on-line gambling operators alleging unfair business practices - seeking to bar credit card companies from collecting gambling debts owed by California consumers, since gambling is illegal in that state - and arguing that as on-line gambling wagers are illegal transactions, they are unenforceable in the California courts. (Online gambling is illegal in the United States)

Credit card accounts are the key to Internet casino betting, as anything else is too slow - so it figures that without credit cards, on-line gambling will do it pretty tough.

LATE NEWS

JACKPOT APPROACHING $20 MILLION

The big Megabucks Jackpot in Nevada has stepped over the $19 million mark and is quickly approaching $20 million and if it's still there when CBI gets there, we're going to give it a bit of a whack - what the hell - a $20 million Jackpot paid over 20 years, or a lazy million a year less tax, should be a fair sort of pension. *We can't read about this Jackpot without thinking about poor old Omaha Jack, who won the Jackpot, but didn't win it because he'd pulled it off with only one coin - wonder if he's necked himself yet.*

NSW GOVERNMENT STUFF-UP 'AUCTION"

Like they've stuffed just about everything else they've touched, the NSW Government have stuffed up their own 'auction' of 2300 slot machine licenses amid allegations of impropriety and breaches of confidentiality. It's still on though - just extended - and it's known that there were bids of over $50,000 a license, the first time round.

CHRISTIE'S COMIN TO VEGAS

Christie Hefner, fiesty daughter of Playboy's Hugh, is searching for a site in Las Vegas, and unlike her dad's earlier efforts, she's very serious about it. Christie is as sharp as a tack - some say she's a block off Hef's (Hugh Hefner) chip. Be that as it may, word is leaking out that the business lady has engaged a former casino executive from a major company to help her find a Vegas property.

Playboy dabbled in a Boardwalk casino in Atlantic City a while back, but when a bunny failed to come out of a hat, Hugh baby hit the toe, but Christie is reportedly made of much sterner stuff and if she breaks into Vegas, she'll make her presence felt.

TABCORP GOES TO HEAD OF THE LIST

Speculation on the future of Crown Casino being what it is, just by going about their business and making record profits, Victoria's cashed up Tabcorp have quietly moved to the head of the list of those who are likely to end up in control of the big gaming complex. Lloyd (Williams) baby probably still thinks different, but everyone and their dogs believe he has to go, and almost as many believe Tabcorp's wily chief, Ross Wilson, will swoop, when he feels the time is ripe.

$2 MILLION SCAM

Working with bent dealers a group of sharks have ripped a couple of million out of Jupiters and Crown on the mini baccarat tables. Apparently they nearly got Star City too, but the Sydney casino was alerted and saved .

WORLD'S LARGEST RIVER BOAT CASINO

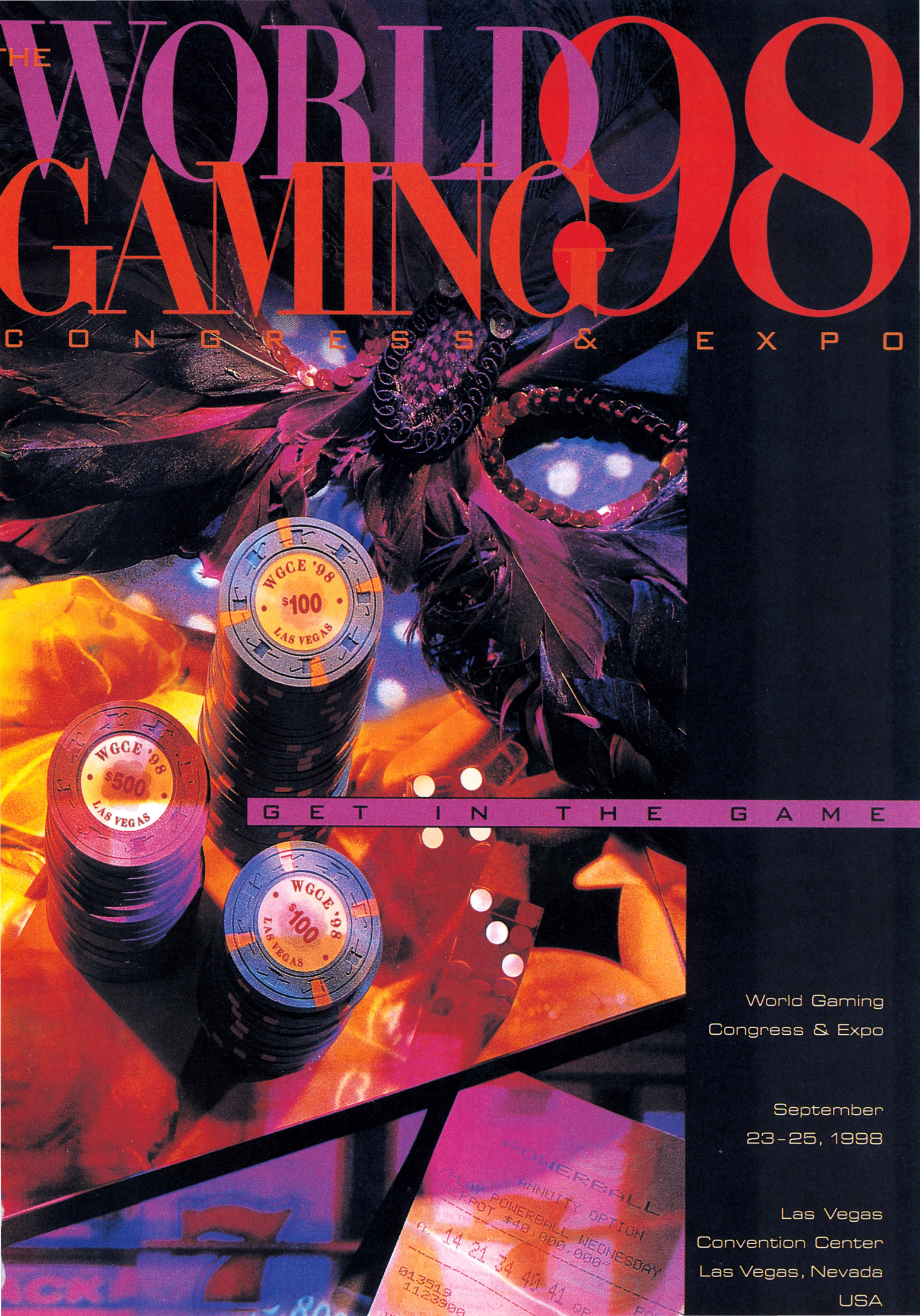
Caesars World is gearing up to launch what's touted as the world's largest riverboat casino, but some analysts believe the Ohio River project won't live up to expectations. Caesars World, a $1.5-billion-a-year casino company owned by Starwood Resorts, plans to open the 'Glory of Rome' in November 15 miles downriver from Louisville. Caesars owns 71 percent of the $300 million project, which will include a 500-room hotel and a golf course. Riverboats in general have been all but a disaster in the US, so it does seem a bit of a punt by Caesars.

TABCORP IN SHARE PAY-OUT

TABCorp have paid back more than $150 million to shareholders with a 33 cents a share payment. The company however, still have $150 million odd in cash reserves and big borrowing power if they find something to buy.

THE WORLD GAMING 98

CONGRESS & EXPO



GET IN THE GAME

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Product News and Reviews

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While most cranes can accommodate Beanie Babies, these specially themed cranes from Smart, give their operators a genuine edge, and Bean Bag dolls are here to stay anyway.

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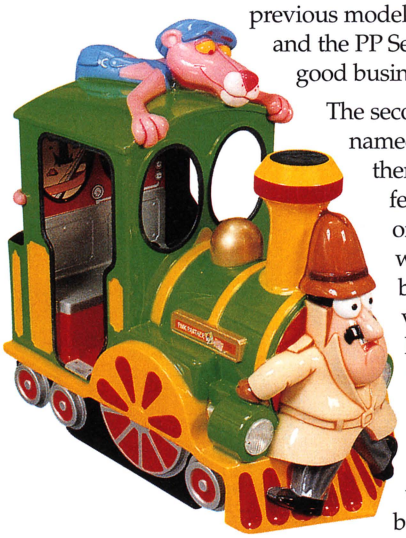
Pink Panther Train - Jolly Roger

Jolly Roger, the UK Kiddie Ride maker will release two new rides at this months AMOA Expo in Nashville.

The first is the Pink Panther Train pictured which features both the Pink Panther and Inspector Clouseau, and this one is being released to coincide with a new Pink Panther movie that's due to be released. This is the third Pink Panther KR made by Jolly Roger, the previous models being the PP Police Van, and the PP See Saw- both have done very good business in world markets.



The second new model will be named 'Totally Garfield' and there's no prizes for guessing it features the totally obnoxious orange cat that kids everywhere think is cool as cool can be. In this one, there's no vehicle (hence the name) and kids sit inside a big Garfield which is based on an original drawing sent to Jolly Roger by Jim Davis, the creator of the cat. Watch for these two, they're money in the bank.

Major League Baseball Ride - Kiddie Rides USA

Even Kiddie Rides USA, who give their new rides a hell of a testing before putting them into the market, got a surprise with this one when they installed six pieces at the Major League's "Leagues Baseball 'FanFest'" recently. The six rides had lines of kids waiting throughout the events, and recorded a quite incredible, 17,280 plays over four and a half days equating to $8,640 at 50 cents a ride.

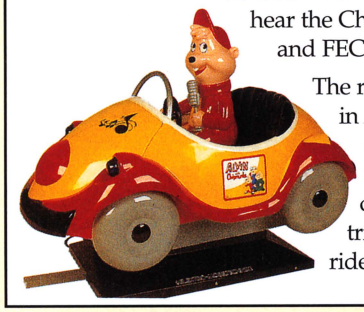
Needless to say, KR USA people were jumping over the moon, and a few operators present soon worked out that they were looking at a Kiddie Ride that was earning at a rate which if maintained, would see the ride paid for in a matter of a couple of weeks.

That rate probably can't be maintained of course, as this was a Baseball fest, but even if it takes six months in malls or similar to earn 'payback', it's still a big, big winner.

The rides are developed with Major League Baseball who will provide US operators with a team logo for the area in which the ride is located. Money in the bank also.

Alvin Car - EMT • George Campbell & Co

We gave you the tip on how hot the Alvin character is with little kids when this ride first came out, and we hear the Chipmunk is 'killing' them in malls and FEC's all over the world.



The ride has only recently been available in Australia, and those operators who are operating it, are heading for a much quicker 'payback' than their counterparts in many other countries, courtesy of our established $1 a ride, price of KR play. Great property.

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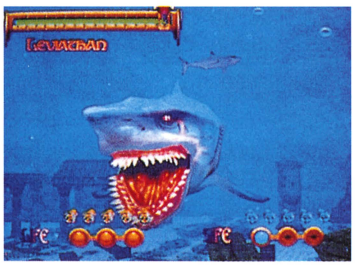
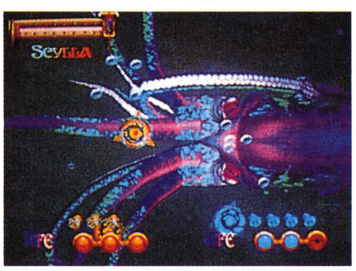
The Ocean Hunter - Sega

Here's the Sega game we wrote of a couple of issues ago, that we were told was doing better than Time Crisis 2 in Tokyo testing. As written at that time, we doubt it's that good, but the word out of Japan is that it's good, and that it definitely can earn. We're going to have to wait and see how it does in other markets before getting too carried away, but at least it's an original game and not another sequel, so that gives it points.

The tricky part, is finding out what the game is, and the best we could decipher from a report written in a mix of Japanese, English, and possibly Mexican Lithuanian, it's a submarine gun game where the player is on some underwater quest, and has to beat off a whole heap of deep water beasties to get where he's going. (Kindly don't sue if that proves to be incorrect) The game play is said to be good and there's apparently a lot of fast moving action.

The graphics as can be seen look pretty swish, and from what we can gather it's done on the Model 3 system, so it should have a bit of depth (no pun intended) We'll know more shortly, but The Ocean Hunter does appear to be one to check out when it comes into the general market.





Caution

A flurry of activity by Sega going into this years JAMMA with another four new games listed here , continued talk of House of the Dead 2 being ready for JAMMA, and probably a couple more to be seen when the show opens, which is great if we were into numbers, but we're not.

While they've certainly been busy little Vegemites in the Sega game making department, bear in mind that on past performances when they put out a big mix of games, only one, or possibly two of them, at very best,will be anyways successful.

You can just about bet the house on there being one top game, but the house would be just as safe if you bet that there's one real pup among them. Just be wary of any hype and don't be guided by which Sega give the greatest space to at the shows, they're good game makers, but pretty crook judges. Good Luck.

Dirt Devil - Sega

While we're telling you about Sega games that we know virtually nothing about, here's another one that's just surfaced. Dirt Devil is an off road driving game that's for sure, but one report we have says 'car', and another says 'bike'. Whatever it is, and we don't believe it's got both car and bike like that Taito game a couple of years ago, it too appears to be original, making it three originals on the trot for Sega just after we've slammed them for only making sequels. Guess you could say....that figures.

Spike Out - Sega

Here's another new - and original - game from Sega which we also know little about. (Someone there has closed down a lot of the 'leaks', but that won't be for long)

Maybe the full working title of Spike Out - Digital Battle Online, gives a clue to it being something other than just another 3D fighting game, but we really don't know anything more about it than the screen pictures you see, it's on the Model 3 system, and what our stand-in man in Japan tells us, which is that it's OK.

Star Wars - Sega

And yet another new game from Sega, that could also be original. It's apparently an 'intergalactic shooting game' taken from the movie and is one more to watch for. Meanwhile, there's continued talk of House of the Dead 2 being tested in Japan for release at JAMMA, but our guys haven't found it in the usual haunts and we're starting to doubt HOD 2 will surface this year.

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Racing Jam • Chapter 2 - Konami

It's not hard to understand operators getting extremely pissed off when manufacturers release a sequel, long before they've had a chance to make any money out of the original game. SNK have just done it with Samurai, and now Konami up the stakes by doing it with what's a pretty expensive game (a very expensive game if bought in the big 70 inch D/x cabinet) Are the company going to give operators of the first game free updates? Yeh, we're kidding, of course they're not, there's not even any mention of a ROM update being available for purchase at this point.

And what of the game in 'Chapter 2' ? We haven't seen it in the flesh or played it, but our people in Japan yawn when they talk about it. It's apparently just a whole lot more of the same, a bit prettier maybe as the game developers become familiar with the system, but still basically more of what wasn't that hot to start with.

'Cause, let's face it, for the dollars asked, Racing Jam is an honest enough game, that can earn a few bucks, but it's no world beater.

As we were yawning also while listening to the reports of Chapter 2, we don't really know what's different about it, but if pushed to bet, we'd say a few new cars, a few new tracks, and stuff all else.

How terribly exciting!

Bass Angler 2 - Konami

And here's another sequel from Konami before the first game has received it's last rites, though we doubt anyone will worry too much about this one. The fishing games go reasonably well in Japan, but we haven't seen any evidence of them doing well anywhere else as yet. The interesting thing about this one is that it's on Konami's new System 573, which delivers the games on CD ROM. A system like this could be a boon for operators if the company put some decent games on it, but we tend to think it will only be used for 'quickies' and sequels. We wonder, does the 573 indicate these people have plans for 573 bloody sequels?

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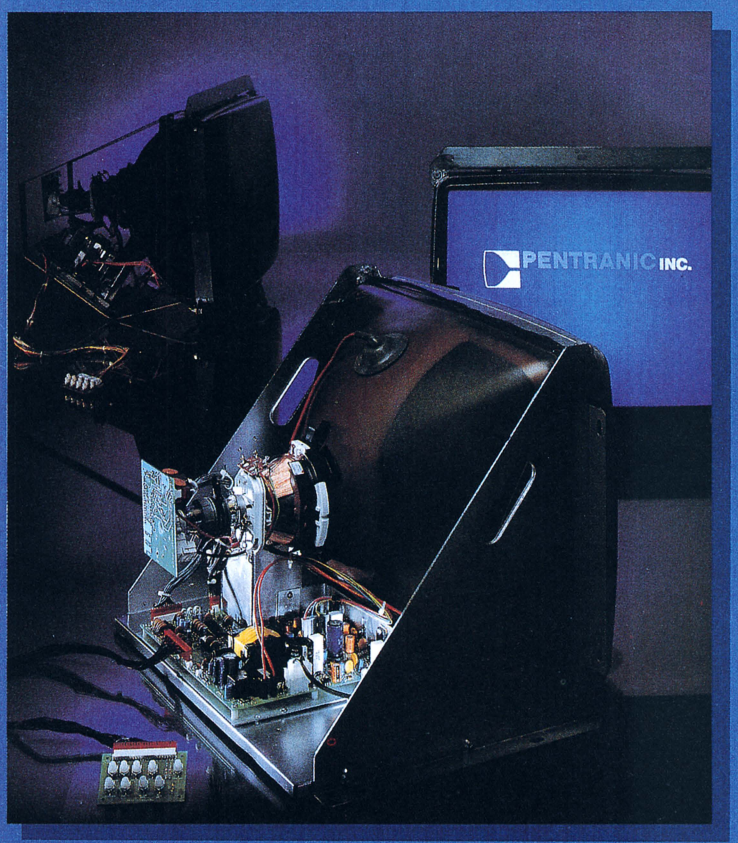

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Psychic Force 2012 - Taito

Taito are bowling along, basically concentrating on making games they can use in their large Japanese operations and sell a few of into the local market, but every now and then they come up with a pretty good game that's capable of working outside of Japan, and this Psychic Force sequel may be one of them.

A good old fashioned space shoot-em-up, PF 2012 has shown it can earn with a very strong performance in Japan, but the theme, which is apparently all that remains of the original game, and the reported "excellent game play", could make it a viable proposition outside Japan. Certainly looks worth checking out at one of the upcoming Trade Shows.

Vapor TRX - Atari

Atari are one of the few video game making companies that are still trying to be innovative and this new racing game is a pretty good example of that.

In Vapor TRX, players can fly their futuristic spaceships up, down, around and through the playfield in a fun race game that should be appreciated in the arcades.

And apart from the racing aspect, the spaceships also have some interesting weapons which make it as much of a battle to the death, as it is a race.

Atari have also, cleverly made the ships easy to control so that any type of player will get value for their money, even whilst learning the tricks that are needed for them to come out winners.

Vapor TRX started shipping last month, so it will be seen at the AMOA Expo and while we have no test reports, we think operators will find this one well worth a look at.

SF Zero 3 - Capcom

If you're becoming confused by all these numbers, 'Alpha's' and 'Zero's' attached to the Street Fighter name, Join the club.

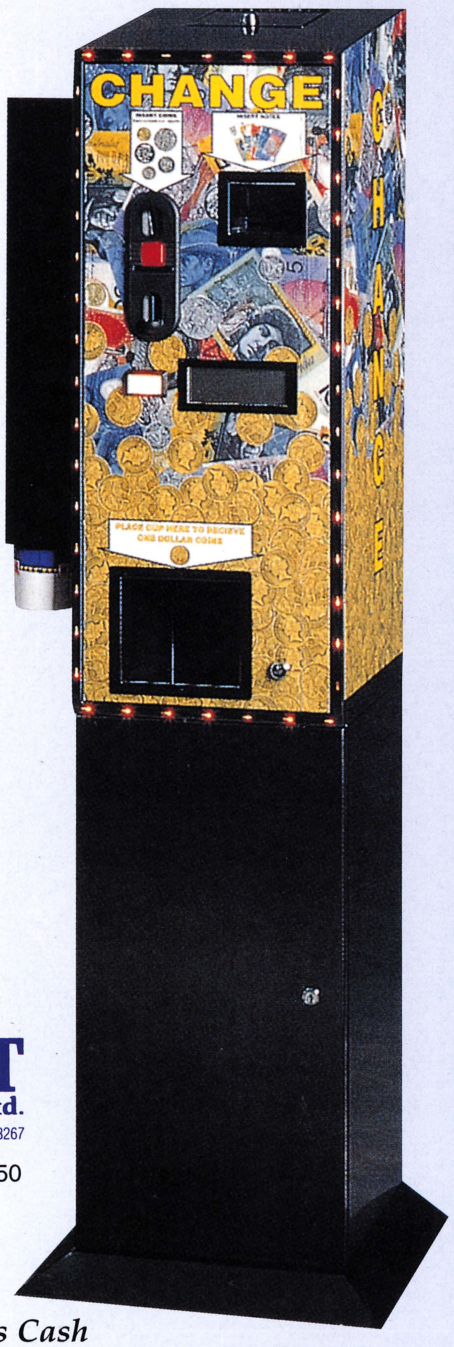
We're told that this Zero 3 is a new one, but find it hard to tell the difference between it and the last couple of SF's - furthermore as our own protest against this mindless production of sequels, we have absolutely no intention of playing it to see if there is any difference.

We signed off Street Fighter back around version 20, and while Capcom may think it very clever to whack out a new Street Fighter title every month, we think it shows they are totally devoid of any imagination.

Like several other Japanese game making companies, they cannot think past making sequels.....*and people wonder why kids are playing PlayStation, N64 or PC games on their computers rather than go to the arcades.*

Like the last 10 or so, this one may earn for a few weeks, but there's little value in it for our money.

THE VGS CHANGE MACHINE



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World Game Ratings

JAPAN

VIDEO CONVERSION

1 Virtua Striker 2 - v'98
2 Pschic Force 2012
3 SF EX 2
4 Dynamite Cop
5 Tekken 3
6 Super W Stadium 98
7 Fighting Vipers 2
8 King of Fighters 97
9 Metal Slug 2
10 SF3 2nd Impact
11 Strikers 1945 2
12 Esprade

VIDEO DEDICATED

1 Time Crisis 2
2 Beatmania
3 Daytona USA 2
4 Panic Park
5 Sega Rally
6 Top Skater
7 Get Bass
8 House of the Dead
9 Virtual On
10 Downhill Bikers

PINBALLS

1 Jurassic Park
2 Medieval Madness
3 Pinball Magic
4 Twister
5 Addams Family

USA

VIDEO GAMES

1 Tekken 3
2 Marvel vs Capcom
3 Golden Tee 97
4 Striker 1945 2
5 Metal Slug 2
6 Real Bout Special
7 Bust a Move Again
8 Raiden Fighters

VIDEO DEDICATED

1 Time Crisis 2
2 Lost World
3 Top Skater
4 House of the Dead
5 Rush the Rock
6 Gun Blade NY
7 California Speed
8 NFL Blitz
9 Radikal Bikers

PINBALLS

1 Medieval Madness
2 Attack From Mars
3 X-Files
4 Starship Troopers
5 Champion Pub

BAR VIDEO GAMES

1 Megatouch XL
2 Touchmaster
3 Concorde

ENGLAND

VIDEO CONVERSION

1 Virtua Striker 2 Vs'98
2 Tekken 3
3 World Cup '98

VIDEO DEDICATED

1 Time Crisis 2
2 Sega Rally 2
3 Harley Davidson
4 Kick It

PINBALLS

1 Medieval Madness
2 Viper
3 Champion Pub

BRAZIL

VIDEO CONVERSION

1 King of Fighters '98
2 Neo Geo Cup '98
3 Tekken 3
4 World Cup '98

VIDEO DEDICATED

1 Virtua Striker 2
2 Sega Rally 2
3 Top Skater
4 House of the Dead

PINBALLS

1 Medieval Madness
2 X-Files
3 No Good Gofers

HONG KONG

VIDEO CONVERSION

1 Virtua Striker 2 v '98
2 King of Fighters '98
3 Virtua Striker 2
4 Star Gladiator
5 St Fighter EX 2
6 Psychic Force 2012

VIDEO DEDICATED

1 Time Crisis 2
2 Daytona USA 2
3 Panic Park
4 Sega Rally 2
5 House of the Dead

PINBALLS

1 Theatre of Magic
2 Medieval Madness
3 Attack From Mars
4 Champion Pub

GERMANY

VIDEO CONVERSION

1 Virtua Strike 2 '98
2 Neo Geo Cup '98
3 Tekken 3
4 Zero Point
5 Cool Boarders

VIDEO DEDICATED

1 Time Crisis 2
2 Sega Rally 2
3 Lost World
4 Harley Davidson
5 Cruisn' World
6 House of the Dead

PINBALLS

1 Medieval Madness
2 Scared Stiff
3 X-Files
4 Attack From Mars

AUSTRALIA

VIDEO CONVERSION

1 Tekken 3
2 St Fighter EX 2
3 Virtua Striker 2
4 Neo Geo Cup '98
5 Zero Gunner
6 Golden Tee '97

VIDEO DEDICATED

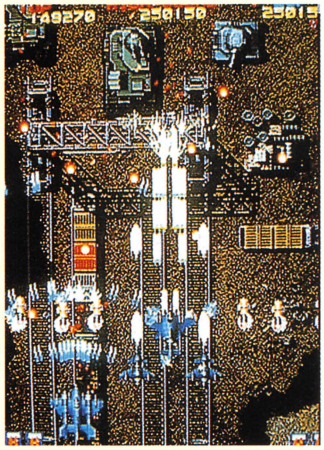
1 Time Crisis 2
2 Daytona USA 2
3 Sega Rally 2
4 Daytona USA
5 Top Skater
6 Lost World D/x

PINBALLS

1 Medieval Madness
2 X-Files
3 Attack From Mars
4 Starship Troopers
5 No Good Gofers

Raiden Fighters Jet - Seibu

While we're currently pretty dark on all the sequels, it's hard to include Seibu in that darkness with their latest Raiden game as they're only a small company and have nowhere near the resources of the likes of Sega, SNK or Konami.



On top of that, the market probably needs a shooting game and most of the Raiden games have had no trouble earning their owners the required dollars.

This one is reported to us as being one of the better Raidens and that would put it in Raiden 2 class. It looks good and apparently plays good, with even more action than previous games, both in the air and from the ground.

Raiden Fighters Jet is pretty reasonably priced, has a good pedigree, and fills a hole in the market, so it could do pretty well.

We expect it will be exhibited at all of the upcoming Trade shows so if you're looking for kit games, have a look at this one.

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CB MAGAZINE Product News and Reviews

King of Fighters '98 - SNK Neo Geo

This one is by far the best of SNK's latest releases, including the Hyper Neo 64 games, and players are really getting into it, though it will sound the death knell to KOF '97, which was still doing remarkably well in some markets, prior to this one's release. We're not particularly impressed with the way SNK are marketing '98 in Brazil for example, and the price of Neo cartridges seems to be going up considerably, but it still should prove good value for Neo Geo operators. Somewhere in this game there's something different, but apart from a few new characters and bits of scenery, it seems pretty much the same to our eye. Players however, see it differently, and we expect it to do very well.

Beast Busters • Second Nightmare - SNK Hyper 64

This is a dedicated gun game hasn't got a number after it, but it's still basically a sequel to the dedicated game of the same name that SNK made before releasing Neo Geo in the 80's.

The original Beast Buster did OK, but there have been a stack of excellent gun games put through the market since, and though this one is tarted up a bit by use of the 64 bit system, it's not overly impressive if the game we played at SALEX is the finished item.

SNK appear to still have a lot of learning to do with developing games for their new system or conversely, the system isn't all it's said to be. Graphics in this one are only fair, game play tends to get a bit boring and generally the game failed to impress. Price, like that of SNK's 64 bit driving games is 'over the top' for our money, even if the cabinets can be updated with later games and we'd be surprised if the game can leg it with games like Time Crisis 2, House of the Dead 2, or even this new 'Ocean Hunter' we keep hearing about.

Samurai Spirits 2 - SNK Hyper Neo 64

We can't quite fathom the thinking behind the release of this one unless SNK are admitting that the original game (original for the Neo 64 - version 4 or 5 of the Samurai game) released a few months ago is a bit of a 'limp faller' and they have fixed it up with this one. But we haven't heard of any special deals for operators of the first game - and we can't really see that they have fixed anything up, as it seems like just another Samurai game in most respects and looks like doing it tough in the market.

Operators at SALEX where it was first shown, were also unimpressed, but even if they liked it, there's no guarantee they'd buy, because like many operators around the world, they still have not come to grips with the prices asked for the Neo 64 System and games.

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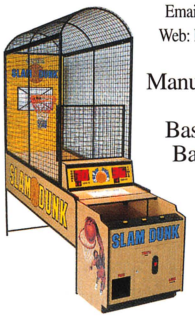

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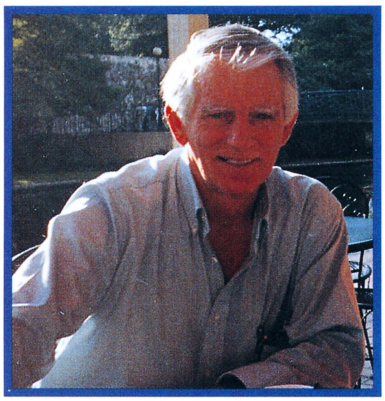

Till Next Month.....

Jack Rodios

It's that time of the year when Trade Show 'groupies' like yours truly, spend more time in Jumbos, Hotels and Convention Centres, than in the office, but what the hell, someone has to do the crappy jobs I guess.

Nah, that's not really correct, actually I get a kick out toddling into Shows all over the planet and meeting up with mates from all over the place, and fellow 'groupies', so I'm not complaining, in fact I spend half my time cursing that I didn't get into this caper a lot earlier than I did.

One thing that bugs me though, (brought to mind by a recent statement from the Auckland Warriors football (Rugby League) mob, who reckon 'jet lag' from flying the 2 hours to Australia every second week, is the reason for them playing like a bunch of old ducks) is always getting asked how I cope with the 'jet lag' that people assume comes with flying.

Now I'm a firm believer that if there is such a thing as jet lag, and I seriously doubt there is, it's in the head, 'cause I do about 150,000 miles a year in Jumbos and have never experienced it. If there is such a thing, it has to be in the head, all this talk of 'body clocks getting out of sync' and such crap really gets to me.

I've never heard any tick-tocking going on in the body, and I was made before they had these silent, quartz clocks - I've heard a lot of other queer noises mind you, that are probably trying to tell me something, but no tick-tock.

I reckon it's all academic hogwash of the first order, created to ensure academics, public servants, lawyers and other free loaders, can have a couple of days off on full pay after an aeroplane trip, to play with their ill gotten Duty Free goodies. It's all the $10 copy Rolex watches they buy that they hear ticking, not a bloody 'body clock out of sync'.

So if it's not in the body, it must be in the head - or in some heads - and this is the tricky bit - is my head too intelligent to take any notice of it - or is the head too thick to recognise it - am I perhaps, too dumb to get jet lagged?

Well, with my ability to get into strife, I have to seriously doubt that it's an over abundance of intelligence that's the problem - there's certainly never been any evidence of it anyway - but the alternative - too dumb - doesn't go down too kindly either - Sure I got whacked by a seven year old playing a rotten Soccer game on the PlayStation, and yes, I have just about completed rebuilding an entire house when a simple renovation would have sufficed - and yes again, I have ensured we stay broke for the next 5 years or so in doing that - and I did just spend a couple of days I couldn't afford, foiling Lease companies and computer salespeople, only to go out and buy a new G3 a couple of days later - and yes again, I recently got completely routed in a Court case that "I could not possibly lose", but surely that's no real indication that I'm a total dumbo, they're just normal, run-of-the-mill, 'Shit happens' sorts of things that can happen to anyone - Aren't they?

And I distinctly remember a few years ago when I tried to tell the Tax man that I was too dumb to understand all the crappy papers I was supposed to fill in, how he wouldn't cop it. "You're not that dumb" said he with finality and gave me a nice old whacking.

And if I was dumb, I would have tried the same story the next year, but I didn't, I created a new one, thought it was a beauty.....and still got whacked.

OK, but this is where it gets really sticky, if I'm not too intelligent, and not too dumb, that would have to mean that I'm somewhere in between - average - and surely there's no fate worse than being average - that's the pits - if you're average, all those crappy statistics the academics come up with like "the average family has 2.6 kids", apply, and I'm bloody sure I don't want them applying to me. Who wants .6 of a kid, what .6 do you get, top bottom or in between?

'Average' is bloody frightening..... and anyway, an average bloke couldn't have created this page of absolute crap .....It may be easier to acknowledge jet lag than it is to deny it - *yep, I think I can hear something inside ticking after all.....*

ADVERTISERS INDEX

Ago's Distributing	5
Able Amusements	PP
Benchmark Games Inc	17
Bondeal Int'l	40
Compumatic	31
CKC Group	58
DBR Leisure	43
Deith Distributing	11
Escape Electronics	IBC
Excellent Competence Ltd	18
Gamemasters P/L	28 & 29
Galaxy Electronics	74
George Campbell & Co	6
Global Commission Sales	3,46 & 47
Golden Gate Trading	14
Harry Levy Contractors	16
Highway Amusements	13
Harcor Security	62
ICE Inc.	9 & 35
Island Designs Inc	33
Machine Talkers	65
MaxFlight Corp	53
M & P Amusements	PP
Mikohn Australia	59
Milwell Pty Ltd	63
Namco USA	51
National Ticket Co	
Opus Entertainment	15
Pentranic Inc	71
Rock-Ola Manufacturing	BC
Smart Industries	45
Skee-Ball Inc	21 & 39
Storelli Distributing	22
Syndicate Printers	70
Tuning Electronics	19
Trident Poker Machines	72
Target Win	25
Techtronic	PP
Zone Laser Games	39

TRADE SHOWS

AMOA '98 (Nashville)	69
Fun Expo '98 (Orlando)	49
IAAPA (Dallas)	55
ICE '98 (London)	61
World Gaming Congress	67

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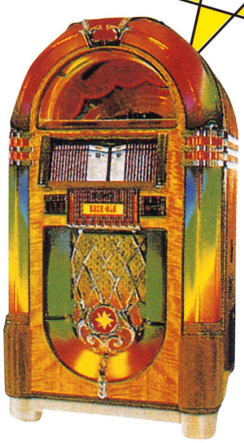

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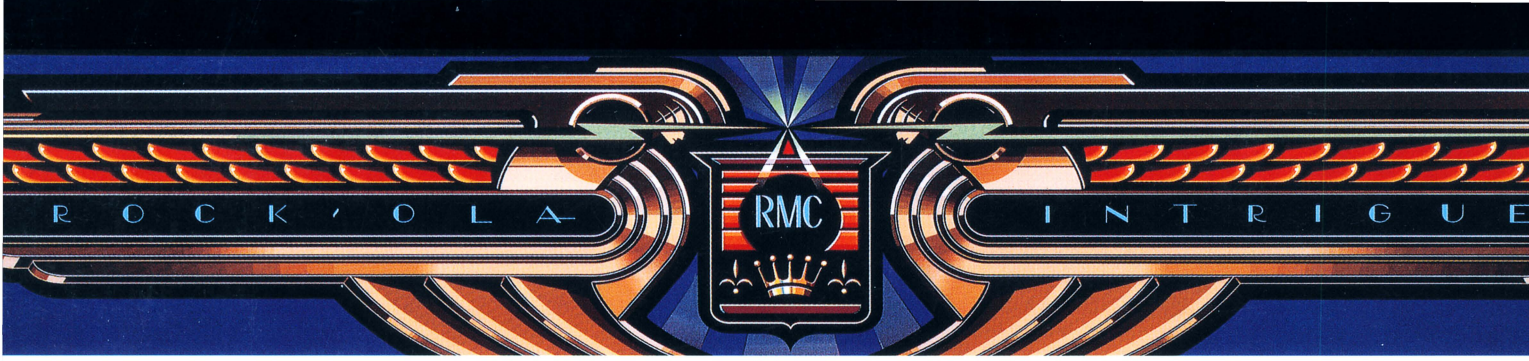

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